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WENTIETH CENTURY ITERATURE

A SCHOLARLY AND CRITICAL JOURNAL

Essays on

Nabokov's *Lolita*

Lessing's Novels

Frost's "The Census-Taker"

Ford's *The Good Soldier*

Vivien Eliot's Publications

Updike's Rabbit Novels

The Modern Lyric

UME 34 SPRING 1988 NUMBER

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Twentieth Century Literature

A SCHOLARLY AND CRITICAL JOURNAL
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VOLUME 34 SPRING 1988 NUMBER 1

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CONTRIBUTORS

KERRY AHEARN is associate professor of English at Oregon State University, Corvallis. His work has appeared in the *Atlantic, TLS, Texas Quarterly, Western Humanities Review,* and elsewhere. He is currently at work on a book-length study of fiction in the contemporary American West.

BRUCE BASSOFF is the author of *Toward Loving: The Poetics of the Novel and the Practice of Henry Green* and *The Secret Sharers: Studies in Contemporary Fictions,* as well as numerous articles on modern and contemporary literature and critical theory. He is professor of English at the University of Colorado.

BRIAN CONNIFF, assistant professor of English at Ohio University (Lancaster), is the author of *The Lyric and Modern Poetry* to be published later this year. He is currently writing a study of the prison and literature.

WILLIAM DORESKI, an associate professor of English at Keene State College, is the author of essays on Dickinson, Robert Lowell, A. R. Ammons, and William Carlos Williams in *Essays in Literature, Massachusetts Review,* and elsewhere. Editor of *Earth That Sings,* a book about the poetry of Andrew Glaze, he is now at work on a book about voice in the early poems of T. S. Eliot. His own poems have recently appeared in *Salmagundi,* the *Beloit Poetry Journal,* and in other journals.

GARY R. DYER is a graduate student in English at the University of Pennsylvania. His essay on Thomas Love Peacock will appear in a forthcoming volume on literature and secret societies.

MOLLY HITE is the author of *Ideas of Order in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon* and is currently completing a book-length study, *The Other Side of the Story: Structures and Strategies of Contemporary Feminist Narratives,* for the press at Cornell University, where she is assistant professor of English. She has published articles on the writings of Pynchon, Alice Walker, and Zora Neale Hurston, and her novel, *Class Porn,* appeared last year.

LORETTA LUCIDO JOHNSON received her Ph.D. in English from Columbia University in 1979. She is vice president and director of corporate communications at Oregon Bank.

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CONTRIBUTORS

BERNI BENSTOCK is professor of English at the University of Miami. A distinguished Joycean, he is completing *Narrative Con/texts in Dubliners*, of which this essay is a part. At present he is also at work on a series that includes *Narrative Con/texts in Ulysees* and *Narrative Con/texts in Finnegans Wake*.

JAMES MICHAEL BUZARD is a doctoral candidate in English at Columbia University and an editor of the journal *Critical Texts*. His dissertation treats tourism in European culture from 1800 to the present.

WAYNE KOESTENBAUM is assistant professor of English at Yale University. He has published poems in the *Ontario Review*, the *Yale Review*, and elsewhere, as well as an essay on John Ashbery in *Poesis*. His prize-winning essay is part of a book entitled *Double Talk* which Routledge will publish next year. Its subject is male literary collaborations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

JEFFREY MEYERS has written biographies of Katherine Mansfield, Wyndham Lewis, and Ernest Hemingway. He has published articles on twentieth-century writers in many critical journals. Professor of English at the University of Colorado/Boulder, he has recently been made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

DAVID ROESSEL is at work on a study of the Asia Minor disaster in English and American literature. His essay on Yeats will appear later this year in *Perspectives on Contemporary Literature*.

SCOTT SIMPKINS is assistant professor of English at South Dakota State University. He has published articles on semiotic strategies in texts by Artaud, Plato, William Blake, Barthes, George Sand, Joyce, and Breton. He is currently completing a book-length study on English romantic poetry and semiotics.

LEON SURETTE is professor of English at the University of Western Ontario. His essays on American and Canadian literature have appeared in the *Hudson Review*, *Paideuma*, *Critical Inquiry*, and many other journals. The author of *A Light from Eleusis: A Study of the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, he is currently at work on a study of the relations between literary modernism and the occult.

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KAY BOYLE ISSUE
SANDRA WHIPPLE SPANIER, *Guest Editor*

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CONTRIBUTORS

Jesse T. Airaudi teaches at Baylor University and is the author of literary studies, including "A Slumber Sealed: Science and Idealism in Darwin's *Autobiography*" and "Czeslaw Milosz' Passion for 'Place': Soul's Knowing Under 'The Wormwood Star.'"

Lois Bar-yaacov, lecturer in English and American Literature at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, has published essays and reviews on Marianne Moore, William Carlos Williams, and Ezra Pound in *Hebrew University Studies in Literature*, the *Explicator*, and *Concerning Poetry*. She is at work on a study of the Marianne Moore–Bryher correspondence.

David W. Beams has contributed to *Criticism, Boston University Journal, Comparative Drama, Theatre Journal, Theatre Arts*, and *The Armchair Detective*. He teaches at Borough of Manhattan Community College.

Joseph Fichtelberg is assistant professor of English at Fordham University. His essay on the *Autobiography* of Benjamin Franklin appeared in the Spring 1988 number of *Early American Literature*.

Barbara Stevens Heusel, who teaches British literature at Wake Forest University, has published several articles on Joyce and the visual arts. She founded the Iris Murdoch Society and is the Society's Secretary-Treasurer. She is at work on a book-length study of Murdoch's fiction and plays.

John F. Hulcoop is a professor of English at the University of British Columbia. Articles on Browning, George Eliot, Truman Capote, Timothy Findley, and Woolf have appeared in the *Modern Language Review*, the *New York Public Library Bulletin*, and *Dalhousie Review*. He has guest-edited the *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*, edited the Webb *Selected Poems*, and is a published poet.

David Lloyd is an assistant professor in the English Department at LeMoyne College. His articles and interviews have appeared in *Agenda, Ariel, Planet*, and *TriQuarterly*, and he is currently working on a study of history and politics in Geoffrey Hill's poetry.

Caroline Zilboorg is associate professor of English at Lake Erie College. She is currently editing the Richard Aldington–H. D. correspondence and will be abroad during 1988–89 to do research and writing on the first volume, which will include the letters before 1920.

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Humbert Humbert's Use of Catullus 58 in *Lolita*

Gary R. Dyer

Five times in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* the narrator, Humbert Humbert, uses a particular poetic phrasing in evoking his "nymphet," Dolores "Lolita" Haze.[1] After Humbert describes first meeting Dolores, his landlady's daughter, he tells the reader that "this *nouvelle,* this Lolita, *my* Lolita, was to eclipse completely her prototype [Humbert's childhood love 'Annabel Lee']" (p. 42). In his diary he writes, "she, *this* Lolita, *my* Lolita, has individualized the writer's ancient lust . . ." (p. 47). When Humbert knows that Lolita soon will leave for summer camp, he describes the nymphet and comments that when she matures "*that* Lolita, *my* Lolita, poor Catullus would lose forever" (pp. 67–68). After her mother dies, Humbert and the orphan begin an affair, and he warns Lolita that if he goes to jail for statutory rape "*my* Lolita, *this* Lolita will leave her Catullus and go [to a correctional school or reformatory], as the wayward girl you are" (p. 153). At the climax of the book, his confrontation with the married Lolita when he finally reveals the depth of his feelings for her, he writes, "I insist the world know how much I loved my Lolita, *this* Lolita . . ." (p. 280).

While Alfred Appel notes simply that Humbert is echoing "Catullus's evocation of his enchanting Lesbia,"[2] the reference in each of the five instances above is specifically to the first line-and-a-half of Catullus 58, a poem that records the degradation of the Roman poet's former love, Lesbia:

> Caeli, Lesbia nostra, Lesbia illa,
> illa, Lesbia, quam Catullus unam
> plus quam se atque suos amavit omnes,
> nunc in quadriviis et angiportis
> glubit magnanimos Remi nepotes.[3]

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> Caelius, my Lesbia, that Lesbia,
> that Lesbia, the one whom Catullus
> loved more than himself or all his people,
> now on street-corners and in alleys
> is masturbating the noble-minded heirs of Remus.

(Humbert uses italics to mimic Catullus' emphatic placement of the second demonstrative *illa,* "that.") Appel writes that Humbert "sees himself in a line descending from the great Latin love poets," Catullus and his successors, Propertius, Tibullus, and Horace.[4] In addition to the five imitations of the phrasing of "Lesbia nostra, Lesbia illa, / illa Lesbia," Humbert uses the phrase "my Lolita," or a variation of it, thirty-five times in *Lolita,* and the book ends with him writing that "the refuge of art" is "the only immortality you and I may share, my Lolita" (p. 311).[5]

Lolita proclaims its own fictionality by giving the reader hints of things outside its own fictional world—for example, the name of Clare Quilty's collaborator, "Vivian Darkbloom," is an anagram of "Vladimir Nabokov." Nevertheless the novel insists on making the reader suspend disbelief; the work while mocking naturalistic conventions uses them toward an end, and *Lolita* is Nabokov's most naturalistic novel. By putting aside the matter of the book's self-conscious artifice and taking Humbert's account at face value, we can by illuminating the narrative illuminate the novel.

Humbert's use of Catullus 58, and of the traditions of its ancient genre, is an important and hitherto neglected component of *Lolita.* Critics have studied at length some of Humbert's other literary comparisons for Lolita, the most pervasive of which are to the title characters of Edgar Allan Poe's "Annabel Lee" and Prosper Mérimée's *Carmen.* Catullus is referred to in *Lolita* more often than any other author except Poe, Mérimée, Shakespeare, Joyce, and Proust; the Latin poet is more visible than Keats, Cervantes, Dante, Flaubert, Rimbaud, Carroll, Eliot, Stevenson, Baudelaire, Maeterlinck, Browning, Verlaine, or Housman.[6] Humbert also compares his desire for Dolores Haze to that of Dante for Beatrice, Petrarch for Laura, Poe for his thirteen-year-old wife Virginia, and Proust's narrator Marcel for Albertine (Humbert the writer reads literature as history, confusing the poetic speaker with the historical poet, and we reading Humbert must risk this fallacy of viewing Catullus' or Petrarch's verse as a trustworthy literal account of the poet's life). Catullus is nearly the most ancient writer to whom Humbert alludes, and Lesbia is the earliest literary precursor of Lolita mentioned.

I believe that Catullus 58 is more important to *Lolita* than any other

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work except "Annabel Lee," and I am arguing in the following pages for two interrelated assertions about the role of Catullus' poem in Humbert's account: first, that Humbert's Catullan phrasing, simply as an echo of a Latin love poem, is a clue to the pattern behind the names "Dolores" and "Lolita," names that are both pseudonyms; and, second, that the Catullus allusions, taken with regard to the poem's context in the Roman poet's story of love and disillusionment, constitute one of several ironic comparisons Humbert makes to Lolita, and are a key to Humbert's purpose in writing, making "this Lolita," who is far more worthy than Lesbia, live forever through literary art.

"I have camouflaged everything, my love," Humbert writes (p. 269), and throughout his memoir he uses pseudonyms for characters, pseudonyms that have significant connotations in the story. When he tells his readers at the book's end that "I have camouflaged what I could so as not to hurt people," he then writes, "And I have toyed with many pseudonyms for myself before I hit on a particularly apt one" (p. 310); the suggestion is that by camouflage Humbert means, in most cases, appropriate pseudonyms, usually one with thematically relevant associations. For himself he chooses the pseudonym that "expresses the nastiness best" (p. 310); the "double rumble" of "Humbert Humbert" to Nabokov is "hateful" and "kingly," suggesting "a royal vibration for Humbert the Fierce and Humbert the Humble."[7] The associations of place names, such as "Camp Q" 's suggestion of Humbert's rival, playwright Quilty, are also important.

A clue to the nature of Humbert's pseudonyms for the object of his love lies in a convention of Latin amatory poetry that apparently Catullus initiated. The Roman poets used pseudonyms in writing about real women in their love verse: Catullus' "Lesbia" was really named Clodia; Tibullus' "Delia" was named Plania; Propertius' "Cynthia" was really one Hostia. As Richard Bentley was the first to point out, each pseudonym has the same number of syllables and the same metrical pattern as the woman's real name. In his notes on Horace, Odes 2.12.13, Bentley comments that Roman poets, including Catullus, Propertius, and Tibullus, "did the same thing that *Acron* charges upon *Horace,* by changing Names, only observing the *Number,* and also *Quantity* of the Syllables, so as to make them alike."[8]

"Lolita," the nickname that dominates Humbert's narrative, is similar metrically to "Dolores," the girl's formal given name. The similarity is more striking if we follow Nabokov and pronounce "Lolita" with "the first syllable . . . as in 'lollipop,' the 'L' liquid and delicate, the 'lee' not too sharp"[9]—note also that Humbert rhymes the name with the

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French "alita" (p. 258). Humbert is following the Latin poetic practice in using the amphibrachic names "Lolita" and "Dolores." The great advantage of such pseudonyms for the Roman poets, we can suppose, was that one could write using the real name and substitute the pseudonym later. Because Humbert is writing in prose he has no such considerations of metrical convenience (only one metrical poem in the book contains the name Lolita), but rather he uses the metrical code because he is drawing on poetic tradition and affecting poetic style. We do know of another poetic disguise in the book: "Haze" rhymes with Lolita's real surname, according to John Ray, Jr., who has edited Humbert's manuscript for the press (pp. 5–6). The lyric nature of much of his account is unquestionable, and Humbert assumes explicitly the Catullan poetic role: he calls himself a poet (pp. 33, 90), reproduces several of his poems in the text (pp. 18, 63–64, 257–59, 265, 301–02), and depicts himself in his verse "sentence" for Quilty wearing a Roman "flavid toga" as Catullus might (p. 302).

"Lolita" is Humbert's "real" nickname for the girl, and not simply a name he devises when he writes. Editor Ray tells us that the girl's "first name" appears, unchanged, in the published text: it "is too closely interwound with the inmost fiber of the book to allow one to alter it, nor (as the reader will perceive for himself) is there any practical necessity to do so" (p. 6). Twice Appel comments that this "first name" is "Dolores," but it is "Lolita" and not "Dolores" that dominates the book, and clearly the only name that can remain undisguised is the girl's nickname, the name that cannot point to the real girl because no one who knows it remains alive when the book is published.[10] Only Humbert uses the name "Lolita" in the book—Charlotte Haze prefers "Lo" (see pp. 40, 42, 48, 52, and 65) while others, including Quilty (p. 300), use "Dolly," and Humbert refers to her as "Dolores," "Dolly," "Lola" (pp. 11, 52, 72), and "Lo" both in conversation and in his narrative as is appropriate, although, he notes, "in my arms she was always Lolita" (p. 11). Ray has changed "a few tenacious details that despite 'H. H.' 's own effort still subsisted in his text as signposts and tombstones" of the real people (p. 5). If "Dolores" were the girl's real name that Humbert leaves untouched in his manuscript, the name certainly would have been changed by Ray, so "Dolores" must be a pseudonym Humbert uses to replace the real name. Humbert has made a "formal agreement with the so-called authorities" (p. 282) that the book will not be published until Lolita is dead (as, just to be sure, he repeats [pp. 310–11]), and his only reason is that he "realized [he] could not parade living Lolita" (p. 310).

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Humbert's pseudonyms are meant to protect people, and twice he gets revenge by revealing names. In anger he refers to their neighbor to the east in Beardsley, "prude and prurient Miss East—or to explode her incognito, Miss Fenton Lebone" (p. 208). Humbert tells us that all the names of Lolita's Beardsley friends are approximations except one (p. 192), and Appel interprets this to refer to Lolita's schoolmate Mona Dahl: "Because she was Lolita's accomplice in deceit . . . H. H. takes his vengeance by revealing Mona's name to the world"[11]—although Ray (out of ignorance?) puts Mona's name in quotation marks in his foreword (p. 6). "Clare Quilty" is almost certainly a pseudonym, and Humbert expresses no desire to immortalize the man's guilt and punishment (the newspapers have already proclaimed this famous playwright's murder, as Ray notes [p. 6]). Humbert goes to awkward lengths to conceal even place names: Quilty's car is from the state "one adjacent to the state Beardsley was in" (p. 228); of her address, "General Delivery, Coalmont," he writes that it was "not 'Va.,' not 'Pa.,' not 'Tenn.'—and not Coalmont, anyway" (p. 269).

The derivation of the name "Lolita" from "Dolores" through "Dolly" and "Lola" is clear in the book (see p. 11), so it seems odd that Lolita is the real nickname and Dolores not the real formal name. Perhaps Humbert, in writing, works back from his lilting endearment "Lolita," which perhaps is metrically similar to her real amphibrachic name, to the formal name "Dolores," suggesting *dolor,* sadness. Thus Humbert gives the girl two poetic alternative names, etymologically related as well as similar metrically to each other, and possibly Lolita's real first name is accentually similar to these two pseudonyms Humbert has devised. These two names are useful for his literary effects as are the other pseudonyms in the book; Humbert's hint at the sadness of Lolita's story in the *dolor* of "Dolores" is as important as the Sapphic connotations of "Lesbia" (and, as Appel notes, " 'Dolly' is an appropriate diminutive," suggesting a doll).[12]

The intricate argument given above is consistent with what Ray and Humbert tell us, and it is probably the best account possible of the nature and relation of the names "Lolita" and "Dolores." That Nabokov had such a connection in mind seems to be supported by the scansion of his original name for Lolita, "Juanita Dark."[13] Erudite Humbert may know Bentley's original comment about the major Roman love poets, but if he does not he still easily can have learned in school or on his own the simple metrical code with which Catullus derives "Lesbia" from "Clodia." Humbert gives great emphasis to the name "Lolita": it is the first and the last word of his memoir, and when he breaks down in the

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"tombal jail" where he is writing, he asks the printer to "Repeat [her name] till the page is full," as though only the repetition of "Lolita" can represent his obsession. The Catullan rhetoric figures not just in the five echoes of "Lesbia mea, Lesbia illa, / illa Lesbia" but in the thirty-five other repetitions and permutations of the phrase "my Lolita," and if the name itself is the product of a poetic disguise as I have argued, then the Catullus references include as well all the many occurrences of this name that is so "closely interwound with the inmost fiber of the book." Catullus is evoked throughout Humbert's memoir, and Catullus is central to what Humbert is trying to tell us, his readers.

What is the function of this specific Latin love poem, Catullus 58, in *Lolita*? Clearly Humbert, by comparing himself to Catullus, is placing himself in a tradition of love poetry that runs from the Roman poet to Marvell. Lolita is being compared with Lesbia, but what is the nature and extent of this comparison? Strict biographical parallels between the two women fail at the start, as the aristocrat Clodia Metelli, traditionally recognized as Catullus' Lesbia, was perhaps ten years older than the poet.[14] Apparently the noble son of Rome who first took Clodia from Catullus was his dissolute friend Marcus Caelius Rufus, and it is in connection with Caelius that we have Cicero's description of Clodia Metelli as "Clodia, muliere non solum nobili verum etiam nota" ("a woman not only of nobility but of notoriety").[15]

Other, stronger comparisons come to mind: Lolita, who deserts Humbert for his "brother" Quilty (p. 251), in turn leaves him, much as Lesbia leaves Catullus and then Caelius; the Veronan Catullus loses his beloved to "magnanimos Remi nepotes," corrupted men of good Roman families, and the Frenchman Humbert loses Lolita to two Americans: first to artistically corrupt Quilty, who is "practically impotent" not just sexually (p. 300) but as a playwright, then to physically corrupt Dick Schiller—a partially deaf war veteran (with a bad complexion, a "large and hairy" Adam's apple, and "black and broken" fingernails [p. 276]) who pulls Lolita down several social classes. The strongest similarity between Catullus 58 and *Lolita* is in the evocation of the loss of a woman, while the most interesting differences lie in how the two speakers, Catullus and Humbert, perceive the characters of the women involved and in how they deal with their loss.

Certainly the echo of Catullus' passage "Lesbia nostra, Lesbia illa, / illa Lesbia" that stays in the reader's mind occurs in Humbert's final meeting with Lolita. After she has told Humbert how she left him for Quilty, only to be abandoned by the playwright, Humbert realizes that he loves her "more than anything I had ever seen or imagined on earth

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or hoped for anywhere else" (p. 279)—just as Catullus loved Lesbia "plus quam se atque suos amavit omnes" ("more than himself or all his people"). Humbert addresses his audience, the "ladies and gentlemen of the jury":

> You may jeer at me, and threaten to clear the court, but until I am gagged and half-throttled, I will shout my poor truth. I insist the world know how much I loved my Lolita, *this* Lolita, pale and polluted, and big with another's child, but still grey-eyed, still sooty-lashed, still auburn and almond, still Carmencita, still mine. . . . No matter, even if those eyes of hers would fade to myopic fish, and her nipples swell and crack, and her lovely young velvety delicate delta be tainted and torn—even then I would go mad with tenderness at the mere sight of your dear wan face, at the mere sound of your raucous young voice, my Lolita. (p. 280)

While Humbert's evocation of the girl echoes Catullus' lines on Lesbia, this effusive expression in writing of undying love is a break with the ancient model. Humbert's literary allusions often mislead us, making us expect the bitter endings of the works involved, such as Mérimée's novel, in which José kills Carmen after losing her to Lucas the picador.[16] Both Lesbia and Lolita are lost to sexual servitude to another, but Humbert redeems his love for Lolita as Catullus does not with Lesbia—the final picture we get of Lesbia in the poems is one of degradation.

Each woman is associated with sexual promiscuity after she has left her lover, but Lolita refuses to do what Lesbia does. In Catullus 58 the poet seems disgusted by the Lesbia who "nunc in quadriviis et angiportis / glubit magnanimos Remi nepotes" ("now on street-corners and in alleys is masturbating the noble-minded sons of Remus"). Humbert feels similar distaste for what Quilty asked Lolita to do to the "beastly boys" in his movie. She was living with Quilty and his friends at the Duk Duk ranch ("Duk Duk" is an oriental term for copulation)[17] when he gathered "two girls and two boys, and three or four men, and the idea was for all of us to tangle in the nude while an old woman took movie pictures" (p. 278). Humbert presses for details, and she says that Quilty demanded

> "Crazy things, filthy things. I said no, I'm just not going to [she used, in all insouciance really, a disgusting slang term which, in a literal French translation, would be *souffler*] your beastly boys, because I want only you. Well, he kicked me out." (p. 279; the bracketed paraphrase is Humbert's)

Humbert, with characteristic verbal decorum, avoids reproducing the word "blow." "She refused to take part because she loved him," he writes, "and he threw her out" (p. 278).

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To Catullus Lesbia is unfaithful and dishonest. When she tells him she would rather marry him than Jupiter, he comments, in Carmen 70:

> dicit: sed mulier cupido quod dicit amanti,
> in vento et rapida scribere oportet aqua
> (lines 3–4)

> So she says; but what a woman tells a lustful lover
> merits being written in the wind and running water.

Her infidelities and lying lead him to dislike her even as he desires her, he writes in Carmen 72:

> quod amantem iniuria talis
> cogit amare magis, sed bene velle minus.
> (lines 7–8)

> such wrongs force a lover
> to love more, but to like less.

Her behavior, stemming from an apparent lack of personal ethics, is the crucial factor in Catullus' estrangement from her.

Lolita does lie to Humbert, deceiving him to meet with Quilty, but her personal similarity to Lesbia does not go very far. Indeed, a reading of Catullus suggests how ironic is Humbert's comparison of Lolita to Lesbia; what more striking contrast could there be than between this orphaned pubescent girl and a mature, corrupt aristocrat? Carl Proffer writes that "Lolita's literary antecedents . . . may be divided into two groups, the demonic and the angelic. . . . On the heavenly side are Beatrice, Laureen, Annabel Lee, Pippa, and perhaps Juliet. On the hellish side are Lilith, Rahab, the Vampire, Zemfira, Carmen, and [Swinburne's] Dolores."[18] Lesbia falls into the demonic group, but the association is largely ironic (as are all of the evocations of evil seductresses), properly depending not on Lolita the girl but on her being a nymphet, which Humbert calls from the first "demoniac" (p. 18). Another such predecessor for Lolita comes from Keats's "La Belle Dame sans Merci," in which the speaker is warned, "La Belle Dame sans Merci / Hath thee in thrall"; Humbert writes, "my school-girl nymphet had me in thrall" (p. 185). Juxtaposing "my school-girl nymphet" with "La Belle Dame" is as ironic as the Lesbia references. Nymphetsy is not in a girl's nature as Humbert claims early in the book, but is imposed on her by men like Quilty and himself, and it is only temporary, as he is all too aware. Lolita's deceit, her sordidness, is part of a role into which she is pushed—a role requiring the cynicism of a Lesbia, and one she at last

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rejects. In her final meeting with Humbert, when she is married and pregnant, she tells the whole story, honestly.

In *Lolita* the threat of corruption and crime, of the sort of degradation that claims Lesbia, follows Lolita. The novel is set in a time with more rigid (though vaguely stated) sexual standards than today, and we as readers ought to remember that in the United States in 1952 fellatio, under the vague blanket term "sodomy," was a crime, although seldom enforced, and the Mann Act (to which Humbert refers, nervously, on page 152) still forbade taking women across state lines for immoral purposes. Any sexual activity for an unmarried woman was a fall from grace; indeed, for the social historian *Lolita* can provide some insight into the age's underside of ambiguous sexual taboos and resulting fear and guilt. During Humbert and Lolita's first trip, their year-long ramble around the country, he warns her that "if we two are found out, you will be analyzed and institutionalized"; when he tells her that "*my* Lolita, *this* Lolita will leave her Catullus and go there, as the wayward girl you are" (p. 153), he is allowing part of the blame for their illicit affair to fall on her, and despite her bravado she is more afraid of the law than he is (as Humbert records [p. 173]). Deceit and prostitution are both drawn into Humbert's impressions of Lolita. After their arrival in Beardsley he notes "a definite drop in Lolita's morals," marked by her increasing insistence on pecuniary rewards for her sexual favors (pp. 185–86). Later Humbert tells us, "By permitting Lolita to study acting I had . . . suffered her to cultivate deceit" (p. 231). She becomes friends with Mona Dahl, an "elegant, cold, lascivious, experienced young female" (p. 193)—Humbert's memories of Mona involve not only corruption but maturity, that great enemy of nymphetsy.

At this point in the story Humbert's imagery for Lolita suffers a marked decline: he imagines her working in "the foul kitchen of a diner (Help Wanted) in a dismal ex-prairie state" (p. 187); Lolita may be "playing the pimp" for Mona (p. 194), who is one of "those little harlots" (p. 205); Lolita's "wenchy smell" and badly applied lipstick remind him of a repulsive prostitute in France (p. 206); Lolita has a "diabolical glow" (p. 216) that, as Appel observes, comes from Quilty;[19] Mona's cryptic letter to Lolita is her "witchery" (p. 225); and when Humbert sees Lolita with Quilty she is a "vile and beloved slut" (p. 239).

Later Humbert comes to associate this feeling of sin and criminality, which he sees surrounding Lolita, with his rival, Quilty. When he first approaches Quilty's house, "Pavor Manor," he envisions "the inside of that festive and ramshackle castle in terms of 'Troubled Teens,' a story in one of [Lolita's] magazines, vague 'orgies,' a sinister

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adult with penele cigar, drugs, bodyguards" (pp. 294–95). Humbert in his memoir often portrays Quilty as his double or "brother," and the criminal guilt reflects on himself as well as on Quilty: Humbert believes that the man following them during their second trip is a detective (pp. 218–19), and so he reminds Lolita that "You know perfectly well what will happen and where you will go if the police find out about things" (p. 220). Humbert even imagines himself on a "wanted" poster (p. 224). Of course, he has committed real crimes, and three times Lolita says to him that he raped her (pp. 143, 204, and 207), which legally is the truth. He suspects Lolita may have told Mona Dahl her "secrets" (pp. 192–93), and events make his paranoia seem justified. Quilty knows how to play on Humbert's guilt in harassing him: he dons a Dick Tracy mask and surprises Humbert in the middle of the night (p. 219).[20]

By assuring Lolita that he wants to protect her from "the horrors that happen to little girls in coal sheds and alley ways" (p. 151) Humbert is protecting himself, but since her mother's death he indeed has begun to feel responsible for the girl. When he warns her about what will happen when she is taken by the police, the reader knows that the "policeman" following them is Quilty and Humbert ought to warn Lolita about him—in so doing, Humbert the father also is alerting her, if we substitute the original for the double, about his own threat to her.

In Humbert's account there are in effect two narrators, with two distinct mental points of view: the Humbert who calls Dolores Haze Lesbia, and the one who knows how she is not. Occasionally Humbert distinguishes the voice of "the artist," who now seems "false and brutal" to him, from that of "the gentleman" (p. 73), and although when Humbert writes of his earlier actions he usually assumes the viewpoint of an earnest pursuer of nymphets, he occasionally gives us a glimpse of his present disposition. He tells how five years before he was at the Enchanted Hunters hotel, holding the key to the room where Lolita lay asleep:

> Jurors! If my happiness could have talked, it would have filled that genteel hotel with a deafening roar. And my only regret today is that I did not quietly deposit key "342" at the office, and leave the town, the country, the continent, the hemisphere,—indeed, the globe—that very same night. (p. 125)

The next night, after Lolita learned her mother was dead, she "came sobbing into [his room]," because, "you see, she had absolutely nowhere else to go" (p. 144). Humbert, as he sits in jail writing, leaves the reader these hints along the way, but for the most part he waits until late in his narrative, until after his last meeting with Lolita, to tell us how he failed

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her, because he wants us to perceive as slowly as he did that he loves this Lolita, a girl left to the peculiar desires of her stepfather. Before he kills Quilty he remembers the moments that betrayed orphaned Lolita's helplessness: how he heard her "sobs in the night—every night, every night—the moment I feigned sleep" (p. 178). He remembers

> the day when having withdrawn the functional promise I had made her on the eve . . . I happened to glimpse from the bathroom, through a chance combination of mirror aslant and door ajar, a look on her face . . . an expression of helplessness so perfect that it seemed to grade into one of rather comfortable inanity just because this was the very limit of injustice and frustration. . . . (p. 285)

Humbert remembers, with regret, "It was always my habit and method to ignore Lolita's states of mind while comforting my own base self," and knows that "even the most miserable of family lives was better than the parody of incest, which, in the long run, was the best I could offer the waif" (p. 289). Humbert's concern is not only moral but paternal, and his relations with her offend him as much as do her subsequent activities, such as the business of Quilty and the Duk Duk ranch. He is her "protector" (pp. 123, 302), but more: when Quilty asks why he mentions Lolita, he can reply, "I am her father" (p. 298).

At the end of Catullus' relations with Lesbia all that remains are his distaste at her promiscuity and his wonder at his past emotions, as we see in Carmen 58 and Carmen 37, which details the "lost" Lesbia's relations with men in a "salax taberna" ("lust-filled tavern"):

> puella nam mi, quae meo sinu fugit,
> amata tantum quantum amabitur nulla,
> pro qua mihi sunt magna bella pugnata,
> consedit istic. hanc boni beatique
> omnes amatis, et quidem, quod indignum est,
> omnes pusilli et semitarii moechi.
> (lines 11–16)

> For my girl, who has fled from my lap,
> who was loved more than anyone else will be loved,
> for whom I fought great wars,
> fucks here. All you good and noble ones
> make love to her, and so too, disgracefully,
> do all the puny lechers of the street.

At the end of *Lolita* the nymphet has left Humbert forever, but she is not "lost," sunk to the promiscuity that Catullus finds so distasteful in

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Lesbia, promiscuity that Humbert, who resorts to a translation to mask Lolita's coarse terminology, would not want for the woman he loves.

By telling his story Humbert tries to transcend not only the loss of the nymphet to maturity and marriage, but her death, and his own death. He writes that his memoir may be published only after Lolita has died:

> Thus, neither of us is alive when the reader opens this book. But while the blood still throbs through my writing hand, you are still as much part of blessed matter as I am, and I can still talk to you from here to Alaska. Be true to your Dick. . . . And do not pity C. Q. One had to choose between him and H. H., and one wanted H. H. to exist at least a couple of months longer, so as to have him make you live in the minds of later generations. I am thinking of aurochs and angels, the secret of durable pigments, prophetic sonnets, the refuge of art. And this is the only immortality you and I may share, my Lolita. (p. 311)

The sad irony of this passage is that Lolita dies not "in the first years of 2000 A.D.," as Humbert hopes (p. 301), but on Christmas Day, 1952, one month and nine days after his death (pp. 5–6). Humbert's only possible victory is to make Lolita "live in the minds of later generations," his "American sweet immortal dead love"—"for," he adds, "she is dead and immortal if you are reading this" (p. 282). The theme of victory over death through art unites Humbert's allusions to Catullus with those in Poe's poem of love surviving death, "Annabel Lee."

By drawing on an ancient source, one older than "prophetic sonnets" or almost all of his other literary sources, Humbert is conveying to his readers the immortality he wants for Lolita. It is not by accident that the five times Humbert recalls Catullus 58's "Lesbia mea, Lesbia illa, / illa Lesbia" are moments of loss and of remembrance: he tells us that Lolita will eclipse Annabel in his memory; he confides that Lolita realizes his "ancient lust"; he mourns his anticipated loss of the nymphet to adolescence; he threatens her with what will happen when she leaves "her Catullus"; and he proclaims at last to us, who are reading his story in the twentieth, twenty-first, twenty-second century, that we must know how he once loved this girl who, though she is as lost to us as she is to him, can live for us through Humbert's language. He seems to envision for her a life span longer than the 2000 years that unworthy Lesbia has had through Catullus' verse.

Humbert writes so that the world may know "how much I love my Lolita, *this* Lolita," and his past tense, like the third person Catullus uses ("quam Catullus unam / . . . amavit"), evokes the distancing that is

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essential to turning experience into art. At the end of Humbert's narrative, he, too, breaks into the third person ("one wanted H. H. to exist at least a couple of months longer . . .") as though the work is becoming independent of him and his mortality. Humbert's "memoir" is artistic, not journalistic; when his account is published no one, even in Ramsdale or Beardsley, will know with certainty that it concerns that particular girl, for he has disguised everything in the manner of Catullus and the Roman love poets, leaving for his readers only the art.

[1] Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (New York: Putnam's, 1958); all references are given parenthetically in the text. Page numbers in *The Annotated Lolita,* ed. Alfred Appel, Jr. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970), conform to those of the Putnam's edition.

[2] Appel, *The Annotated Lolita,* p. 364. Appel is the only writer I have found commenting on Humbert's Catullus references; Carl R. Proffer, in *Keys to Lolita* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1968), p. 22, lists Catullus as one of the many writers to whom Humbert alludes, but he gives no more information or commentary. Appel, in his note (p. 357) for the occurrence on p. 47, lists additional examples on pp. 42, 67–68, 153, 279, 280, and 295, but the exclamation on p. 279 and p. 295 (each simply "My Lolita!") do not mimic the whole phrase as do the other five examples Appel cites. Appel writes, again without identifying Catullus 58 by name, that "the intonational stresses of '*this* Lolita, *my* Lolita,' are borrowed from a donnish translation of a Latin poem" (p. 357), but I cannot find a scholarly English translation that clearly has influenced Humbert, nor do I think it likely the French Humbert might have such a work in mind. At another point Appel writes that Humbert is echoing not only the original Catullus poem but also "imitations such as 'My Sweetest Lesbia' (1601), by Thomas Campion (1567–1620), English poet" (p. 364). Campion's poem imitates Catullus' Carmen 5, which also was used as a model for poems by Ben Jonson (1606, in *Volpone*), Richard Crashaw (ca. 1635), and others. The sentiment expressed in that Catullus poem ("Vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus . . .") is quite unlike the disillusionment of Carmen 58. There is no indication that Humbert here has the English Catullan tradition in mind directly, although he must be familiar with it. Certainly Humbert's memoir more generally has important ties to the love poetry of Jonson, Campion, and particularly Andrew Marvell; I should mention in this regard Michael Long, *Marvell, Nabokov: Childhood and Arcadia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).

[3] My Catullus quotations follow *C. Valerii Catulli Carmina,* ed. R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), except that I have changed each consonant "u" to the more recognizable "v," and, furthermore, I have followed Brian Atkins (*Liverpool Classical Monthly,* 2 [1977], 237–38) and given "magnanimos" in line five instead of Vossius' emendation "magnanimi"; thus the poem reads "noble-minded heirs of Remus" rather than "heirs of noble-minded Remus." Humbert may have read either version.

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[4] Appel, *The Annotated Lolita,* p. 357. Humbert quotes one other Latin love poem, from Ovid's *Amores* (on p. 221); see Proffer, *Keys to Lolita,* pp. 31–32.

[5] I find occurrences of the phrase on pp. 34, 44, 46, 55, 68, 75, 81, 82, 94, 113 (two), 117, 130, 136, 156, 168, 169, 178, 192, 194, 200, 201, 209, 233, 243, 249, 269, 279, 280, 285, 286, 287, 289, 295, and 311. See Appel (*The Annotated Lolita,* p. 394), who correctly terms the phrase "a succinct 'Latin' locution."

[6] See *ibid.,* p. 331. Shakespeare and Joyce each make about ten appearances, Proust five, and Rimbaud four. Proffer, *Keys to Lolita,* pp. 34–53, deals at length with the references to "Annabel Lee" and *Carmen.* "Her bi-iliac garland still as brief as a lad's" (p. 177) echoes (with a change of sex) lines 27–28 of A. E. Housman's "To an Athlete Dying Young": "And find unwithered on its curls / The garland briefer than a girl's" (*The Collected Poems of A. E. Housman* [New York: Holt, 1965], p. 33).

[7] Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), p. 26. Appel notes other suggestions in the name (*The Annotated Lolita,* pp. 321–23). For Humbert as king, see *Lolita,* p. 43 and p. 277.

[8] Richard Bentley, *The Odes of Horace in Latin and English; With a Translation of Dr. Bentley's Notes* (London, 1712), Part IX, 18–19.

[9] Nabokov, *Strong Opinions,* p. 25. In Nabokov's *Ada, or Ardor: A Family Chronicle* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), p. 39, Ada pronounces her own name "the Russian way with two deep, dark *'a*'s, making it sound rather like 'ardor' "—that is, the "ardor" of the book's subtitle. I am not addressing in my argument the distinction between classical quantitative meter and modern English accentual meter. When we say that "Lesbia" is metrically similar to "Clodia" we are scanning the names according to the lengths of their syllables; when I term "Lolita" and "Dolores" metrically similar it is to be understood that I am referring to accentuation (although if we pronounce "Lolita" as Nabokov suggests the similarity to "Dolores" does hold true for vowel length as well).

[10] Appel, *The Annotated Lolita,* pp. 323, 334. James L. McDonald writes, in "John Ray, Jr., Critic and Artist: The Foreword to *Lolita,*" *Studies in the Novel,* 5 (Fall 1973), 356, that "Ray actually credits Humbert only with his own *'bizarre cognomen'* and the surname *'Haze'* which is *'too closely interwound with the inmost fiber of the book to* allow *one to alter it'* [emphasis McDonald's]. One might infer that Ray's alterations are considerable, perhaps even substantial. . . ." Putting aside McDonald's misreading of the text (Ray writes that the "first name," not the surname, is unchanged), it is clear Humbert must be responsible for more than his own pseudonym and the name "Haze." If Humbert is not the source of the name "Lolita," much of the point of his account and the coherence of the novel are lost. The other names, including the ones with literary or historical associations and those pertaining to Quilty ("Camp Q"), point out themes suited to Humbert's viewpoint, not that of Ray.

[11] Appel, *The Annotated Lolita,* p. 393.

[12] *Ibid.,* p. 334. For more associations of "Lolita" and "Dolores," see Proffer, *Keys to Lolita,* pp. 26–31.

[13] Dmitri Nabokov, "On a Book Entitled *The Enchanter,*" in Vladimir Nabokov, *The Enchanter* (New York: Putnam's, 1986), p. 108.

[14] C. J. Fordyce, *Catullus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), p. xvi.

[15] Cicero, *Pro Caelio,* 13, in *M. Tulli Ciceronis Orationes,* ed. A. C. Clark, I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905).

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[16] See Proffer, *Keys to Lolita,* pp. 33, 39–40, and 45–46.
[17] Appel, *The Annotated Lolita,* p. 428.
[18] Proffer, *Keys to Lolita,* p. 26.
[19] Appel, *The Annotated Lolita,* p. 402.
[20] The Dick Tracy identification is Appel's, *The Annotated Lolita,* p. 403.

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Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* and *The Four-Gated City*: Ideology, Coherence, and Possibility

Molly Hite

Shortly before she leaves the Communist Party, the protagonist of *The Golden Notebook,* Anna Wulf, insists to her quondam comrade Jack, "But humanism stands for the whole person, the whole individual, striving to become as conscious and responsible as possible about everything in the universe."[1] In its emphasis on personal and societal wholeness, this passage is part of a network of assertions that seems to set *The Golden Notebook* squarely against tendencies of most other experimental fiction being written during the early 1960s—especially against the decentered subject and the destabilized narrative structure of the emerging literary movement that would be called postmodernism.

Yet two considerations suggest that Doris Lessing's most famous novel has more in common with the narrative ruptures of postmodern writing than either its critical reception or its own injunctions to holism might indicate. First, the pervasive rhetoric of psychic integrity, unity of vision, and narrative coherence is repeatedly aligned with the orthodox Marxism that Anna finally repudiates. Second, this rhetoric resounds through a work that ultimately breaks down its major characters without even making a gesture at reassembling them, and that bifurcates its plot to the point where two separate and irreconcilable versions of a story jostle uneasily for ontological supremacy—for the status of being the account of what "really" happened. To adopt Lessing's own terminology from the 1971 introduction to *The Golden*

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Notebook, the "wordless statement" constituted by the shape of the novel is at odds with the most prominent of its verbal statements.[2]

If these verbal statements about the supreme value of wholeness have proved so persuasive that they have prompted any number of readings purporting to reassemble *The Golden Notebook* according to a realist standard of narrative coherence,[3] one reason is that they synopsize the ideological stance assumed and defended by Lessing during the years when she was writing only realist fiction. In her 1957 essay "The Small Personal Voice," Lessing distinguished as "the highest point of literature" the nineteenth-century realist novel, citing as her reason that its authors had a coherent worldview: they produced "art which springs so vigorously and naturally from a strongly-held, though not necessarily intellectually-defined, view of life that it absorbs symbolism," and they had in common "a climate of ethical judgment; they shared certain values; they were humanists."[4] This identification of realism with metaphysical and moral coherence was part of a Marxist aesthetic that was increasingly preoccupied with the novel as a totalizing structure representing the world grasped in its essential entirety. During the same period, Raymond Williams was calling integration the hallmark of the "mature" realism that postwar society desperately needed, and maintaining that "the truly creative effort of our time is the struggle for relationships of a whole kind," while Lessing's friend Jack Lindsay was seeing in modernist experimentation with the novel an expression of "the terrible disintegrative and isolating pressures of capitalism" and cautioning, "The writer should fight against all that is not humanly whole; he should deepen consciousness of true relationships and situations."[5]

Similar calls for a similarly comprehensive consciousness ring through both *The Golden Notebook* and the subsequent work with which it is most often paired and compared, *The Four-Gated City* (1969).[6] Yet clearly Lessing's fictional practice changed radically after her polemic in "The Small Personal Voice," so that these two novels, both of them historical in subject and encyclopedic in scope, function as transitional works, marking Lessing's turn away from realism toward the increasingly fantastic novels of the 1970s culminating in the *Canopus in Argos* series. For both *The Golden Notebook* and *The Four-Gated City* are *about* coherence, while neither is by realist conventions coherent. In both, Lessing is subjecting the ideology underpinning the convention of coherence to close scrutiny.

In *The Golden Notebook* Lessing is most obviously questioning the coherence expected of characters in realistic fiction: the assumptions

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behind the notion of identity. For instance, when Anna Wulf confronts her psychoanalyst—who has Jungian proclivities but a pointedly political name, Mrs. Marks—she is attacking the rigid humanism that is the premise of both the realist novel and her own therapy:

> Look, if I'd said to you when I came in this afternoon: Yesterday I met a man at a party and I recognised in him the wolf, or the knight, or the monk, you'd nod and you'd smile. And we'd both feel the joy of recognition. But if I'd said: Yesterday I met a man at a party and suddenly he said something, and I thought: *Yes*, there's a hint of something—there's a crack in that man's personality like a gap in a dam, and through that gap the future might pour in a different shape—terribly perhaps, or marvelous, but something new—if I said that you'd frown. (*GN*, p. 473)

The wolf, the knight, and the monk are archetypes: stock characters, finite in number, who together comprise all the possible human variations. In Mrs. Marks's scheme of things, human nature is an unchanging essence that can manifest itself only in a fixed number of preexisting forms, and recognition amounts to attaching the right label, assigning an individual to the proper category. In this context it is clear that the "joy of recognition" derives from the containing and controlling of possibility. Anna, on the other hand, anticipates kinds of characters who elude classification because they elude containment, characters who are, as she goes on to say, "cracked across" or "split" because "they are keeping themselves open for something" (*GN*, p. 473). Earlier in the same conversation she had proposed that in the present age, possession of a coherent identity is damning evidence of limitation: "I've reached the stage where I look at people and say—he or she, they are whole at all because they've chosen to block off at this stage or that. People stay sane by blocking off, by limiting themselves" (*GN*, p. 469). Unity, integrity, self-consistency, she implies, are not privileged, as they are in traditional therapy and traditional characterization. To be whole by societal standards is not to have resisted fragmentation, but to have been reduced to a single fragment.[7]

If these passages most patently foreshadow the advent of Saul Green and the psychological condition that Anna terms "breakdown," they also suggest that for the novelist the problem with conceiving of character in terms of preexisting forms is that such forms do not allow "the future"—anything genuinely new and unassimilated by the dominant culture—to be represented. The question of what can be represented is central to *The Golden Notebook*, and many of the most important observations about the "cracked across" or "split" personality

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are couched in terms of projects for writing. Mrs. Marks's response to Anna's description is "you should be writing again," and Anna's disclaimer, "it would be unintelligible unless I wrote the story of my life to explain it," places ironic emphasis on the fact that the context of this discussion is itself a written representation, in some sense the story of Anna's life, in some sense written by Anna. Implications of the coming affair between Anna and Saul are spelled out with eerily prophetic effect in the closing segment of the Yellow notebook as ideas for short stories (*GN,* pp. 531–41), and the requirements of a projected narrative essentially dictate in advance the shape that this affair will assume: "A man and a woman—yes. Both at the end of their tether. Both cracking up because of a deliberate attempt to transcend their own limits. And out of the chaos, a new kind of strength" (*GN,* pp. 466–67).

But such statements of intent to write about fragmentation of character do not function only, or even primarily, as foreshadowings. To a significant extent, they *substitute* for a representation of a character going through "breakdown," an experience that in its most extreme moments always eludes description. In fact, the most important thing that can be said about the experience of "breakdown" seems to be that it eludes description: over and over on the various levels of the novel, Lessing manipulates a vocabulary of negative words and phrases to reiterate that the central truth of this kind of event remains out of reach, unarticulated. Thus the third-person narrator of the sections entitled "Free Women" reports that Anna encountered "a reality different from anything she had known before as reality," but can describe this "reality" only in terms of what it was not: "It was not being 'depressed'; or being 'unhappy'; or feeling 'discouraged'; the essence of the experience was that such words, like joy or happiness, were meaningless" (*GN,* p. 652). Similarly, Anna writes in the first-person account that constitutes the Blue notebook, "I *knew,* but of course the word, written, cannot convey the quality of this knowing," and in a key passage from the embedded Golden notebook generalizes these observations further, codifying a theory that makes language a mute gesture toward the ineffable:

> The fact is, the real experience can't be described. I think, bitterly, that a row of asterisks, like an old-fashioned novel, might be better. Or a symbol of some kind, a circle perhaps, or a square. Anything at all, but not words. The people who have been there, in the place in themselves where words, patterns, order, dissolve, will know what I mean and the others won't. (*GN,* p. 633)

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Such passages constitute a paradox—they are meaningful statements describing the incapacity of language to mean—that foregrounds the materiality of *The Golden Notebook,* the fact that this novel is a construct of language, just as the projects of representing "split" or "open" characters call attention to the fact that it is a representation. In these ways, the fictional discourse is turned back on itself so as to call attention to the conventions according to which the novel signifies, while at the same time framing and pointing up the implication that there is something significant that is not being said. "Cracks" and "gaps" are thus structural features of *The Golden Notebook* itself and imply at least the possibility of something utterly new, wholly outside realistic conventions. Through them, Lessing implies, the future might pour in a different shape.

By the time she wrote *The Golden Notebook,* then, her attitude toward the ideology governing the realist novel seems to have changed drastically, in ways that echoed her growing disaffection with other aspects of Marxist theory. Lessing had ceased to view traditional novelistic coherence in terms of "a climate of ethical judgment" and saw in its claims of wholeness evidence of a limitation more damaging in that it was not perceived. To adopt the description proposed by an apparently unlikely ally, Philippe Sollers, theorist and practitioner of the *nouveau roman,* the traditional novel had become for her "the way this society speaks to itself," and thereby an instrument of repression, "the manifestation of power in our time and the key to its mechanical, closed everyday unconsciousness."[8] To resist this "mechanical, closed everyday unconsciousness" she systematically undermined the form of the traditional novel, in the process undermining the assumption that this form is the natural structure of all possible experience.

"The game" that Anna plays in *The Golden Notebook* is one analogue of this form, and implicitly parodies conventional notions of novelistic coherence. Something like a meditative exercise, "the game" seems initially to be a means of expanding consciousness and overcoming fragmentation. To play it, Anna begins by "creating" in her imagination her immediate surroundings, then slowly enlarges her scope to "create" the house, the street, and, taking an aerial perspective, the city, the country, the continent, and the world, all the time keeping clearly in mind the earlier stages. The ultimate purpose is to achieve "a simultaneous knowledge of vastness and of smallness" (*GN,* p. 548). But the kind of knowledge for which she aims, in effect the omniscience of the nineteenth-century narrator, is insufficient because it presumes a position of externality for the "creator" that is a kind of control

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significantly, Anna also pictures herself as *above* the spinning world that her mind encompasses. Knowledge of this sort assumes that there is a position of observation, and thus an angle of vision, that is the "correct" one, and in this way imposes a particular form. The thing known is contained, distanced, fixed.

Anna's published novel, *Frontiers of War,* resulted from her having made a set of events in her past into a "story"—a product of hindsight, a re-viewing of experience *sub specie resolutionis*—and her attitude of "lying nostalgia" toward these events is a yearning for the apparent stasis and finish of a closed-off past comprehended completely. It is only at the climax of her "breakdown," when she finds herself viewing "conventionally well-made films" that parody the conventions she herself has taken for granted in imaging this part of her life, that she realizes how limited her vision has been. "And what makes you think the emphasis you have put on it is the correct emphasis?" inquires the projectionist who plays ironic Virgil to her Dante in this dream-vision, and she notes the parodically Marxist use of the word *correct,* throwing finally into question the notion of a coherent single worldview arising from a privileged viewpoint (*GN,* p. 618). "Literature is analysis after the event," she had written much earlier (*GN,* p. 228), and much of the experience she undergoes in this novel has been forcing on her the conclusion that literature, as she has always understood it, invariably falsifies by refusing to acknowledge that "after the event" is only one perspective. But now the projectionist presses further. "How would June Boothby see that time? I bet you can't do June Boothby," he says (*GN,* p. 619), suddenly foregrounding someone who in Anna's memory—and in *The Golden Notebook*—functions as a minor character. The irresistible implication is that every perspective is as "correct" as every other perspective, that the whole is constituted by all possible perspectives, and therefore that an apprehension of the whole is, strictly speaking, impossible.

The structure of the novel reinforces this conclusion, parodying and ultimately betraying the desire for a comprehensive vision. *The Golden Notebook* has been widely read as if it were a realist novel with a few innovative twists, at root cohering as a single story that can be resolved into levels of framing.[9] Thus the third-person sections entitled "Free Women" appear to be an account of the "real" facts and to be the container for the accounts in the notebooks, and the sections identified as the notebooks offer themselves initially as embedded "versions," so that the Black notebook is a vehicle for lengthy flashbacks in the first person, the Red notebook is a chronicle offering more intimate views of

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the political events in "Free Women," the Yellow notebook purports to be a fiction within the dominant fiction, and the Blue notebook appears to be a first-person "rough" version of the more personal events in "Free Women." But the hierarchy of levels is not stable, as if in response to the projectionist's question, "And what makes you think the emphasis you have put on it is the correct emphasis?" "Free Women" not only becomes less important as the novel progresses, but begins to diverge from the notebooks in matters of plot. This is particularly evident in the stories of Tommy, who in "Free Women" shoots and blinds himself but in the notebooks only grows up in a predictably irritating way, and of Anna's affair with an American—in the notebooks, the pivotal experience with Saul Green, in "Free Women" a much more condensed and less extreme relationship with a man identified only as Milt.[10]

Furthermore, "Free Women" and the notebooks tell stories with different and irreconcilable endings. In "Free Women" the discourse essentially returns to its starting point. The two women who began the story alone in the London flat now kiss and separate, each going off to attend to her own compromised ideals, and Molly's shorthand tag, "It's all very odd, isn't it Anna?" sums up the preceding action and confirms the triumph of the dry, ironic tone that Anna was trying to elude in the opening scenes. The notebooks, on the other hand, have a wholly different "ending," in which Anna, prompted by Saul Green, writes a novel with the opening sentence "The two women were alone in the London flat" (*GN,* p. 639). This sentence of course begins the first segment of "Free Women," and thus begins *The Golden Notebook* itself. Anna's literary production accordingly could either be "Free Women"—in which case, as Lorna Sage has observed, "Lessing has produced what geometricians would call an impossible object, for the 'inner' space of the notebooks also contains its outer envelope"[11]—or *The Golden Notebook* itself, in which case the hitherto linear narrative reveals itself to be a Mobius strip.

Furthermore, the distinction between levels of reality—between fact and fiction within the narrative—is also blurred. In the dream-vision of the Golden notebook section, Anna relates that she was required "to go back and look at scenes from my life," but one of these scenes involves Paul Tanner, a character from her own novel-in-process, who is "merged" with Michael, the "real" person who had appeared to be Paul's prototype (*GN,* pp. 616–17). And Saul, instructing Anna on how to begin her masterwork, introduces the two women who are so significantly alone in the London flat as "the two women *you are, Anna,*" (*GN,* p. 639, emphasis added), so that even

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Molly, a character prominent not only in "Free Women" but in the Blue notebook in which Saul himself appears, becomes presumptively still another of Anna's creations or projections, and serves to distance the "reality" of both narratives still further.

In all these ways *The Golden Notebook* disperses both character and plot, challenging the claims of a single, holistic vision to contain ultimate truth. If this dispersal initially seems to be at odds with the novel's attack on compartmentalization, it eventually begins to expose conventional notions of unity as the most dangerous compartments of all because they do not acknowledge other possibilities. But the treatment of possibility in this novel is essentially negative; Lessing is concerned to create the conditions that would allow the future to make an appearance, but she does little to indicate what shape it might take. Her emphasis in *The Golden Notebook* is on the gaps and cracks. In *The Four-Gated City* she makes the turn toward imaging possibility in positive ways.

In a sense, the method by which Lessing images possibility in *The Four-Gated City* is disconcertingly literal-minded. The future—that is, a chronological period situated after the time of writing—is precisely what is represented, and it does not "pour in" so much as constitute a rather traditional conclusion, which fulfills and to an extent explains the premonitions of catastrophe and transformation informing earlier parts of the story. In a sense, too, she seems to be turning her back on the perception that new experiences require new forms of narration: there are no containing or overlapping frames in *The Four-Gated City,* no ambiguities arising from the testimony of multiple narrators, no grounds for confusion over which version of the story is the "correct" one. In fact, the structure of this novel is emphatically traditional. The third-person narrator relating all of the events but those of the appendix is omniscient, and advances frequent observations on matters of at least global importance. Barring a few flashbacks, the narrative is linear, a straightforward march through a selection of the events of contemporary history taken in chronological order. And the appendix, a standard device of the nineteenth-century novel, ties up loose ends by presenting without comment, in the purest tradition of realism, a group of documents: a newspaper article, several legal papers of various kinds, a number of letters.

But the representation of possibility in *The Four-Gated City* violates a somewhat different convention. To incorporate into a "serious" novel actions that are supposed to take place in the actual future, or to represent people who are, by whatever means, in contact with the

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future, is by the standards of the current literary establishment to mix genres, introducing elements of something Lessing herself habitually calls by the undignified (and misleading) name of "space fiction" and thus somehow trivializing the entire enterprise. It is not immediately evident why the presence of certain kinds of imagined episodes should automatically consign a work that is in any case fiction to marginal status, but the critical reception of *The Four-Gated City* indicates that in letting in the future, Lessing was for many readers putting herself beyond the pale. What is especially ironic about this response is that the novel has anticipated it: the idea that a "distaste factor" implanted by social conditioning makes certain concepts virtually impossible to contemplate is central to the way it deals with the theme of possibility.

In the process of investigating analogues to her own psychic experiences, the protagonist Martha Quest Hesse discovers that certain phrases come to her "soaked in, redolent of, 'dottiness,' 'eccentricity,' shadiness, unpleasantness," and concludes that her virtually reflexive reaction to them is motivated by a variety of fears: "fear of what other people might think; fear of being different; fear of being isolated; fear of the herd we belong to; fear of that section of the herd we belong to."[12] By labeling them "dotty," "eccentric," "shady," and so on, she effectively contains them so that they can safely be dismissed, just as Anna, in the course of Mrs. Marks's therapy, attaches names of archetypes to people in order to define them so completely that they are incapable of surprising. In both cases, what is most threatening is novelty. The narrator of *The Four-Gated City* locates the explanation in contemporary society's resistance to change, a resistance so pervasive that it amounts to a death wish:

> [Society] is an organism which above all is unable to think, whose essential characteristic is the inability to diagnose its own condition. It is like one of those sea creatures who have tentacles or arms equipped with numbing poisons: anything new, whether hostile or helpful, must be stunned into immobility or at least wrapped around with poison or a cloud of distorting colour.
>
> The process is the same under a variety of disguises. There is a new phenomenon, or one conceived to be new: the creature, suddenly alerted, all fear, is concerned for only one thing, how to isolate it, how to remain unaffected. The process is accomplished, in this society, through words. (*FGC*, p. 430)

Of course, the novel must diagnose this condition by *using* words; the problem, as Lessing has conceived it, is how to keep labels from substituting for understanding.

In *The Four-Gated City* she has not, as in *The Golden Notebook*, tried to

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represent possibility in a new kind of writing. Rather, she has written a traditional work that contains instructions for a new kind of reading. The passages analyzing the "distaste factor" encourage the reader to recognize, examine, and resist conditioned responses to certain themes: to take the novel seriously. In addition, she proposes vaguely allegorical or typological models of reading in passages that must themselves be read allegorically or typologically. For instance, Martha and Lynda "used their dreams, their slips of the tongue, their fantasies . . . as maps or signposts for a country which lay just beyond or alongside, or within the landscape they could see and touch" (*FGC,* p. 355) but could not apprehend this new terrain directly:

> It was as if the far-off sweetness experienced in a dream, that unearthly impossible sweetness, less the thing itself than the need or hunger for it, a question and answer sounding together on the same fine high note—as if that sweetness known all one's life, tantalisingly intangible, had come closer, a little closer, so that one continually sharply turned one's head after something just glimpsed out of the corner of an eye, or tried to sharpen one's senses to catch something just beyond them. . . . (*FGC,* p. 357)

While this nuanced, gestural, and basically negative language is similar to the language used in *The Golden Notebook* to describe the experience of "breakdown," Lessing has developed a theory of character in her later book that suggests why such passages might have the potential to communicate. Anna rejected the Jungian doctrine of archetypes because it contradicted a fact of her experience; Martha, on the other hand, appears to accept something like the Jungian doctrine of the collective unconscious because it confirms a fact of her experience:

> if she was feeling something, in this particular way, with the authenticity, the irresistibility, of the growing point, then she was not alone, others were feeling the same, since the growing point was never, could never be, just Martha's, could not be only the property or territory of one individual. (*FGC,* pp. 485–86)

Ultimately the mind itself is universal: "it is not a question of 'Lynda's mind' or 'Martha's mind'; it is the human mind, or part of it, and Lynda, Martha, can choose to plug in or not" (*FGC,* p. 473). This idea, even more than the idea of "breakdown," destroys the coherence traditionally associated with individuality, and thus with realist notions of character. As she explores the implications of "plugging in," Martha, who for four volumes of the *Children of Violence* series has been a more or less conventional protagonist, dissolves into a series of roles, a vehicle

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for impersonal forces, one perspective on or version of a reality approached from other directions by other characters. Her individual existence is finally so unimportant to the plot that it is unclear when or how she dies; one of the documents in the appendix simply mentions in passing "Martha Hesse (now dead) . . ." (*FGC,* p. 609). The effect of this diffusing of personality is to transform what had appeared to be a five-volume bildungsroman, the ongoing saga of a woman's personal growth and development, into an experimental narrative that culminates in a repudiation of the assumptions about personality and history that make the bildungsroman possible. Lessing finally rejects realism by rejecting humanism.[13]

Indeed, certain passages in *The Four-Gated City* suggest that humanity may be the most delusive ideological construct of all. One of the revelations Martha "plugs in" to is that there is no intrinsic reason for assuming that human concerns have priority. Once she abandons this assumption, the notion of an essential humanity deconstructs itself, and the human being is exposed as "an extraordinarily hideous creature" with "eyes that were like coloured lumps of gelatin that had fringes of hair about them and bands of hair above them, and which half protruded from a bumpy shape of pinkish putty or doughlike substance" (*FGC,* p. 470). No longer blinkered by societal preconceptions about the beauty and value of human reality, Martha can see the extent of human deficiency and limitation:

> They were essentially isolated, shut in, enclosed inside their hideously defective bodies, behind their dreaming drugged eyes, above all, inside a net of wants and needs that make it impossible for them to think of anything else. (*FGC,* p. 481)

Paradoxically, it is only by relinquishing humanism that Martha can begin to understand the human condition.

Lessing herself seems to have held on to something like this perception in her subsequent writing. The tendency of the books following *The Four-Gated City* was to place specifically human issues in a more and more cosmic context. After the first volume, *Shikasta,* identifiably human characters disappeared from the *Canopus in Argos* series altogether. By her own testimony, jettisoning the confining conventions of realism and humanism liberated the novel for the representation of new experience, and she remarks in the preface to *Shikasta* on "the exhilaration that comes from being set free into a larger scope, with more capacious possibilities and themes."[14]

This statement suggests rather vividly that the restraints of conventional realism are not only constricting for the characters

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represented; as Anna Wulf repeatedly testified, realism limits the "real" that the *writer* is allowed to depict. By this token, the story of Lessing's writing career has required "a larger scope, with more capacious possibilities and themes," and Lessing has continually wrenched apart from the form of her own public persona in the interest of possibility. The three novels that she wrote after the *Canopus* series returned her to the tradition of realism and prompted speculation that she was retreating from precisely the openness she welcomed in *The Golden Notebook*. But it is worth noting that she managed this return by creating another "gap" or "split," this time, rather alarmingly, in the author.

The occasion was something that she has described as a hoax, the writing, marketing, and eventual publication of two novels, *The Diary of a Good Neighbour* (1983) and *If the Old Could . . .* (1984), which she presented under the pseudonym of Jane Somers. As a hoax, the maneuver was more successful than she had believed possible, in that both books were published, distributed, and reviewed with only a few people suspecting who the real author was. But Lessing's introduction to the reissued volumes implies that the general reception of these two books, a response taking for granted that here was a new and entirely different writer, was not entirely unfounded—that the whole escapade was not simply a matter of a name change and a story dreamed up to fool editors. "Of course, all writers become different characters all the time, as we write about them: all our characters are inside us somewhere. (This can be a terrifying thought)" Lessing reports, and goes on to observe, "Jane Somers knew nothing about a kind of dryness, like a conscience, that monitors Doris Lessing whatever she writes and in whatever style."[15] The third-person reference to "Doris Lessing" is reminiscent of the dislocations informing *The Golden Notebook*, where a change in pronoun signals not only a change of perspective but finally a change of character; and suggests a more literal—and paradoxically less realist—significance in the truism that "all writers become different characters all the time. . . ."

As a writer, Lessing does not seem entirely to inhabit a realist universe. For this reason her nonrealist narratives tend to present themselves as motivated by the demands of mimesis rather than by the more familiar conviction that "the real" is an unnecessary weight on the imagination. For Lessing herself, some violation of coherence seems to be necessary to leave room for representation—which is to say, for possibility.

A less developed version of this essay, "Subverting the Ideology of

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Coherence," was presented at the session of the Doris Lessing Society on Doris Lessing and Ideology during the 1984 MLA. It will be reprinted in the volume of MLA papers entitled *Doris Lessing: The Alchemy of Survival*, ed. Ellen Rose and Carey Kaplan (Athens, Ohio: Univ. of Ohio Press, 1988).

[1] Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook* (New York: Bantam, 1981), p. 360. Further references to this edition will appear within parentheses in the body of this essay, cited as *GN*.

[2] Lessing, *The Golden Notebook*, introd., p. ix. Patricino P. Schweikart elegantly points up some of the implications of this opposition in "Reading a Wordless Statement: The Structure of Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*," *Modern Fiction Studies*, 31, No. 2 (1985), 263–79, although her emphasis is finally on deconstructive or (more sophisticated, less overtly recuperative) "dialectical" readings rather than on the postmodern affinities of the novel itself.

[3] See, for example, Anne M. Mulkeen, "Twentieth-Century Realism: The 'Grid' Structure of *The Golden Notebook*," *Studies in the Novel*, 4 (1972), 262–74; Joseph Hynes, "The Construction of *The Golden Notebook*," *Iowa Review*, 4 (1973), 100–13; John L. Carey, "Art and Reality in *The Golden Notebook*," *Contemporary Literature*, 14, No. 4 (1973), 437–56; Roberta Rubenstein, *The Novelistic Vision of Doris Lessing: Breaking the Forms of Consciousness* (Urbana, Ill.: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1979), pp. 71–170; Rotraut Spiegel, *Doris Lessing: The Problem of Alienation and the Form of the Novel* (Frankfurt: Peter D. Lang, 1980), esp. pp. 59–60.

[4] Doris Lessing, "The Small Personal Voice," in *A Small Personal Voice: Essays, Reviews, Interviews* (New York: Vintage, 1974), pp. 4–5.

[5] Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (London: Chatto, 1961), p. 287; Jack Lindsay, *After the 'Thirties: The Novel in Britain and Its Future* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1956), pp. 188, 15.

[6] Gayle Greene argues persuasively that *Landlocked* (1966), the novel that intervenes chronologically between the two novels under discussion here, is part of the move away from realism, offering "a lyrical rather than a linear mode." See "Doris Lessing's *Landlocked*: 'A New Kind of Knowledge,'" *Contemporary Literature*, 28, No. 2 (Spring 1987), 83.

[7] Two important essays by Claire Sprague point up how positively Lessing views a multiple, noncoherent self in both *The Golden Notebook* and *The Four-Gated City*. See "Doubletalk and Doubles Talk in *The Golden Notebook*," *Papers on Language and Literature*, 17 (1982), 181–97; and "'Without Contraries Is No Progression': Lessing's *The Four-Gated City*," *Modern Fiction Studies*, 26 (1980), 99–116.

[8] Philippe Sollers, "The Novel and the Experience of Limits," in Raymond Federman, ed., *Surfiction: Fiction Now . . . and Tomorrow* (Athens, Ohio: Swallow Press, 1981), p. 61.

[9] Schweickart, in "Reading a Wordless Statement," p. 264, has noted that "in spite of its obtrusiveness, the structure of the novel is easy to circumvent" but such circumvention necessarily involves suppressing certain aspects of the plot. The early reviews were especially inaccurate in this respect; see especially Irving Howe's influential "Neither Compromise nor Happiness," *New Republic*, Dec. 15, 1962, pp. 17–20, and Richard Taubman's untitled *New Statesman*

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review of April 20, 1962, reprinted in *On Contemporary Literature,* ed. Richard Kostelanetz (Plainview, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1964), pp. 402–03.

[10] The blinding of Tommy is the pivotal action of "Free Women": the news of his suicide attempt ends the second section (*GN,* pp. 281–82) and begins the third section (*GN,* p. 371). In the Blue notebook Tommy recedes into the background: he is "involved with a new group of young socialists" and gives rise to Anna's ruminations to the effect that "the one form of experience people are incapable of learning from is political experience" (*GN,* p. 448), and later he marries a girl whom Molly describes as "writing a great tome about the Chartists and she puts aside two pounds a week as a nest-egg against her old age" (*GN,* p. 547). Saul Green enters the Blue notebook (*GN,* p. 549) and carries through the end of the Golden notebook (*GN,* p. 643), while Milt occurs only in the last section of "Free Women" (*GN,* pp. 653–64). An odd prototype of both Saul and Milt, a third American named Dave, shows up in the Yellow notebook (*GN,* p. 536). It is suggestive that Dave is the name of the Saul Green character in Lessing's 1958 drama, *Play with a Tiger,* in which she seems to have worked out much of the "sex war" material in *The Golden Notebook.*

[11] Lorna Sage, *Doris Lessing* (London: Methuen, 1983), p. 55.

[12] Doris Lessing, *The Four-Gated City* (New York: Knopf, 1969), pp. 488–89. Further references to this edition will be included within parentheses in the body of the essay, cited as *FGC.*

[13] Two important accounts of *The Four-Gated City* in relation to the bildungsroman pattern of the *Children of Violence* series and the narrative disruptions of *The Golden Notebook* are in Sage, *Doris Lessing,* pp. 59–68, and in Dagmar Barnouw, "Disorderly Company: From *The Golden Notebook* to *The Four-Gated City,*" *Contemporary Literature,* 14, No. 4 (1973), 491–514.

[14] Doris Lessing, *Re: Colonised Planet 5: Shikasta* (New York: Knopf, 1979), p. ix.

[15] Doris Lessing, *The Diaries of Jane Somers* (New York: Vintage, 1984), p. viii.

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Robert Frost's "The Census-Taker" and the Problem of Wilderness

William Doreski

In many of Robert Frost's best poems the spirit of place that is New England is a diminishing thing, represented by a landscape in which the capacity for human renewal has apparently faded, leaving mad farm wives, eccentric telescopists, and most poignantly the ruins of hill farms abandoned as their owners die off or simply gave up trying to coax the recalcitrant and exhausted land into profit. "The Census-Taker" is characteristic, but it is archaeologically specific, and in the elegiac dignity of its blank verse it partially redeems a spiritually and humanly impoverished semi-wilderness landscape through the historical sensitivity of the speaker and his morally attractive desire for "life to go on living." It is also, as Frank Lentricchia has pointed out, "as explicit a confrontation with nothingness as anything in modern American poetry."[1]

The relative wilderness of much of New England's hill country, its abandoned farmland and logging tracts, the mutability of landscape and its shifting relationship to the idea of home, and the fact of wilderness as a potentially heavy-handed and dehumanizing metaphor of the darker side of the human character occupy Frost from his earliest poems to the end of his career. No summary can convey the complexity of his exploration of these problems, nor the dignity—almost Miltonic, at times—of his elegant verse and the ingenuity with which it embodies and fulfills the poet's ambitious and skeptical vision.

But even a brief glance at some of Frost's other important wilderness poems points to the ambiguities of that vision and suggests why any reading of "The Census-Taker" is tentative at best. The "confrontation with nothingness," which usually in Frost's poetry stirs at

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least a response—usually an affirmative one—from the beholder, occurs in various forms. In "The Hill Wife" the nothingness is not that of an abandoned cut-over landscape but of madness, the nothingness of the mind confronted by its own absence unmediated by the barrier of otherness. Essentially, she fails to keep metaphor in bounds and lets the landscape become sensate, which in Frost's world dangerously exceeds the legitimate function of imagination:

> The tireless but ineffectual hands
> That with every futile pass
> Made the great tree seem as a little bird
> Before the mystery of glass!
>
> It had never been inside the room,
> And only one of the two
> Was afraid in an oft-repeated dream
> Of what the tree might do.[2]

But this is Frost's most extreme statement, except perhaps for "The Witch of Coos." Most of his personae avoid this leap from metaphor to solipsism and instead confront nothingness as an external, decidedly nonhuman phenomenon.

In "Desert Places" a desolate field ("a few weeds and stubble") becomes "more lonely ere it will be less" as snow and night fall, giving this already desperate place "no expression, nothing to express."[3] Yet the speaker, like the speaker of "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," refuses the metaphor of landscape, a nothingness rigidly external to him. Although he is admittedly frightened by this bleakness, he recognizes that what is frightening is not emptiness as such, since the space "between stars" is truly empty and does not frighten him at all. Rather it is the unrealized possibility of habitation, the presence of a wasteland, a nothingness "so much nearer home"; it is his own presence, as arbiter of possibilities and purveyor of the idea of home, that frightens him. The desert places he actually experiences are his "own," are functioning and undeniable metaphors of the possibility of internal absence—whether as madness, death, or merely detachment—within the self out of which he gazes into the falling night and falling snow. As Frost wrote to Louis Untermeyer in 1917, "I have neighed at night in the woods behind a house like vampires. But there are no vampires, there are no gnomes, there are no demons, there is nothing but me."[4]

In "The Wood Pile" the speaker, "Out walking in the frozen swamp one gray day," discovers a characteristic sign of human absence, a woodpile carefully measured and piled and then apparently forgotten:

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No runner tracks in this year's snow looped near it.
And it was older sure than this year's cutting,
Or even last year's or the year's before.
The wood was gray and the bark warping off it
And the pile somewhat sunken. Clematis
Had wound strings round and round it like a bundle.[5]

But in this poem, unlike "The Census-Taker," the speaker rejects the role of spokesman for the absent, refuses to lift his voice to those dreary and beautiful acres of swamp, refuses to accept that the wilderness, itself a stretch of dull gray, is graying this piled-up wood back to the torpor of the phenomenal world outside human experience and concerns. The speaker has already failed to incorporate into his own world the small bird earlier in the poem flitting through the trees ahead of him, has forgotten him for the comforting evidence of human endeavor, and now cannot easily let go of that comfort. Instead of accepting the likely death of the woodcutter, or at least the fact of failure to hold onto what was once won from the wilderness, he postulates an axeman "who lived in turning to fresh tasks," a man whose presence *somewhere* we might take for granted; then to make the best of this artifact's patent inutility, suggests that it might "warm the swamp as best it could / With the slow smokeless burning of decay."

"The Census-Taker"[6] is not only one of the bleakest but the most explicit of these wilderness confrontations. New England here has reverted to something like the "howling wilderness" encountered by early explorers and first settlers. Indeed, it is a New England in the process of reverting to, even reaffirming, that earlier condition. There is something satisfyingly pure about the encounter between humanity and the wilderness, and this purity was not lost on the Visible Saints of Massachusetts Bay. The census-taker is their secular descendant. His meditative voice does not dwell on religious matters but on humanist concerns, on the difficulty of maintaining a toehold of civilization in an abject waste. The poem does not specify a particular place, but we might assume that it is a logging area somewhere in the far north of New England, probably in New Hampshire, since this poem is one of the "Notes" to the longer poem of that title. Clearly the census-taker has walked a long way to get there; it is late in the day and presumably he will have to spend the night in this lonely place.

The problem with which the poem climaxes, whether to "Break silence now or be forever silent" assumes a grim finality in this desolate place. Of course the speaker breaks the silence by the very act of the poem, but also by his expectation that "life go on living," which eschews

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silence in favor of "The people that had loudly passed the door / [who] Were people to the ear but not the eye." This poem defines habitation not in the imagery of the eye but of sound. Many of the important indicators of presence or absence are verbs of sound—"whistle," "breathing," "said," "slammed," "rattled," "declare"—and the central question is whether finally to reject absence and "declare to the cliffs too far for echo" the speaker's self-endowed presence.

The poem opens on a weathery evening on which the census-taker arrives at a crudely constructed, unfinished, and undersized house, isolated in a wasteland hacked out by loggers:

> I came an errand one cloud-blowing evening
> To a slab-built, black-paper-covered house
> Of one room and one window and one door,
> The only dwelling in a waste cut over
> A hundred square miles round it in the mountains;
> (It had never been dwelt in, though, by women,
> So what is that I make a sorrow of?). . . .

Like the Puritans disembarking in seventeenth-century New England he has come on an "errand into the wilderness"; his task is to take the census:

> I came as census-taker to the waste
> To count the people in it and found none,
> None in the hundred miles, none in the house,
> Where I came last with some hope, but not much
> After hours' overlooking from the cliffs
> An emptiness flayed to the very stone.

But in contrast to the Puritans, the census-taker is not apocalyptic. Though diminishing, Frost's New England wilderness continually reasserts itself, reclaiming territory even if in somewhat mutilated form. The diminishment is in grandeur and innocence: each reclamation is grimmer, more insistent, and even more inhospitable. The census-taker faces a wilderness of mutability, not of entropy, and so is free to entertain the possibility of presence in the face of absence, a sense that what was once here could return, and indeed may linger in his very expectations. More immediate though, in the early part of the poem, is the desire to find the wilderness inhabited, to find a presence to offset the sheer absence, the disregard of humanity that characterizes nature. Nature will not speak to him:

> The time was autumn, but how anyone
> Could tell the time of year when every tree
> That could have dropped a leaf was down itself
> And nothing but the stump of it was left

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Now bringing out its rings in sugar of pitch;
And every tree up stood a rotting trunk
Without a single leaf to spend on autumn,
Or branch to whistle after what was spent.

This natural scene might or might not have something to say about the presence of this abandoned house, but if it does it is only because of the way past human presence has mutilated the wilderness:

Perhaps the wind the more without the help
Of breathing trees said something of the time
Of year or day the way it swung a door
Forever off the latch, as if rude men
Passed in and slammed it shut each one behind him
For the next one to open for himself.

As Frank Lentricchia has argued in pairing this poem with "The Black Cottage," "the deserted house in both poems stimulates the creation of a house in the mind that will supply what the real thing can no longer supply: the sense of having locked out the dangerous world outside, the sense of being free from the cycles of process."[7] Process, in this instance, is the diminishment of spirit, and the spirit that fades finds its historical embodiment in images primarily of sound, which alone can overcome the ultimate difficulty of this wilderness, its unrelenting silence. The census-taker, in his agony of expectation, counts nine men in "dreamy unofficial counting" and finally a tenth, himself, then asks "Where was my supper? Where was anyone's?" and the momentary illusion fails.

Because the house itself is perfunctory—"one room and one window and one door"—and its contents suggest how truly perfunctory are the mere semiotics of habitation:

No lamp was lit. Nothing was on the table.
The stove was cold—the stove was off the chimney—
And down by one side where it lacked a leg.

The speaker acknowledges his deliberate if unconscious restriction of his senses: "The people that had loudly passed the door / Were people to the eye but not the ear." Now their existence is a collocation of negatives:

They were not on the table with their elbows.
They were not sleeping in the shelves of bunks.
I saw no men there and no bones of men there.

This uninhabited shell, with its museum-like relics, is merely a token house, as if without its presence the land would be lost even to the possibility of inhabitation. The census-taker has noted parenthetically that women never dwelt in this shell, so the possibility of procreation, of

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peopling this spot in some meaningful and self-sustaining way, has never arisen. Yet people, even if only men, had lived here once. Their disappearance, or nonappearance, is readily explained by the exhaustion of the surrounding timber; yet absence has a mystery of its own, and it permeates everything the speaker beholds.

What dominates the poem, however, is not the lack of people but the innate dignity and humanizing stance of the speaker. He, the census-taker, is not merely a statistician: nor is he there only to consider the landscape with the "outward eye," the eye, for example, of the naturalist who instead of mourning might rejoice at the absence of inhabitants; rather he is there to reexperience the act of habitation and affirm it as a peculiarly human act, one that momently separates us from the hundred square miles of wilderness just outside. The census-taker is like the person in Stevens' poem who "placed a jar in Tennessee / And round it was upon a hill," and found that it "took dominion everywhere."[8]

The former inhabitants of this shabby frame house still exist as long as the census-taker can hold them in his mind, though that is not for long, since much as he inclines to the imagination of the ear he has to defer to the reality of the eye. These "people to the ear" have left signs not only of habitation but of absence as a positive quality—the cold stove, the disconnected chimney, the lack of a lamp, the bare table, the stub of an ax handle with which the speaker arms himself against ghosts—or against his own fear of absence. Insofar as this is a poem about absence it is inescapably about presence, and the vague feel of the possibility of habitation haunts the poem as surely as a ghost haunts its grave, so much so that the census-taker is moved to defend himself against a possibly hostile if physically minimal presence:

> I armed myself against such bones as might be
> With the pitch-blackened stub of an ax-handle
> I picked up off the straw-dust-covered floor.

Only the presence of the speaker can bring both the actuality of absence and the possibility of presence into focus. Otherwise, the house-artifact is meaningless, a sign that requires a reader to render it as a text. The story of ruins is a particularly hoary one, but here the empty house is not a synecdoche of a great empire; it is only a small, partly realized possibility, representing the melancholy of failure, the melancholy that attends a pointless enterprise, the attempt to count souls where there are none. The question, as Richard Poirier points out, is one of the "nature of a 'home' when there are almost no signs of life about it."[9] Here the signs of life are negative and minimal, though the

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census-taker has no trouble reading them. This house fails to define itself as a home because every sign points to absence. But as absence argues for its opposite, for presence, so the silence of uninhabitance demands the act of consciousness, the process of recognition that fills that silence with grief and a final voiced desire. Every act is a determinedly human act, whether of self-defense, of holding the door shut, or of considering, of allowing himself to believe that after all, something might be done to negate this onset of wilderness upon what was once an act of human defiance:

> Not bones, but the ill-fitted window rattled.
> The door was still because I held it shut
> While I thought what to do that could be done—
> About the house—about the people not there.

This apparently desolate landscape, then, is a tabula rasa, a slate left blank by those who preceded the speaker and left him stranded like Gibbon among the wreck of Rome and with a comparable responsibility to reaffirm, if only through historicizing, what once was:

> This house in one year fallen to decay
> Filled me with no less sorrow than the houses
> Fallen to ruin in ten thousand years
> Where Asia wedges Africa from Europe.

The speaker, like the protagonist of "The Most of It," has the opportunity to listen, as few ever do, to the sound of his own voice and see what he can make of it. And like the protagonist of the later poem, the census-taker will find that reading signs requires an entirely human effort. Nature will give nothing except that which is so remote and inhuman that all one can say of it, as Frost says of the "great buck" that is the "embodiment" of something undetermined, is "that was all."[10] Yet for the census-taker the sound of his own voice, though one of reconciliation rather than affirmation, is adequate to answer the wilderness, the absence, the signs of former habitation:

> Nothing was left to do that I could see
> Unless to find that there was no one there
> And declare to the cliffs too far for echo,
> "The place is desert, and let whoso lurks
> In silence, if in this he is aggrieved,
> Break silence now or be forever silent.
> Let him say why it should not be declared so."

The cliffs that refuse to echo his cry, the hundred square miles of waste cut over, offer neither resistance to nor corroboration of his presence. The waste ground, the desert, ostensibly a sign of human

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penetration and the rationale for the existence of the house, as well an explanation of its abandonment, as anyone knows who has traversed the north country, is a landscape of the most painful and desolate absence. The cliffs provide first a vantage point and later a monumentality that resists human reading. The text the speaker proposes is one in which nature occupies the present silence and in which human signs resist that silence in favor of a postulated or historical voice (the voice of the former inhabitants) and the present, and by default dominant, voice of the speaker. The poem reminds us that to speak, to postulate, to historicize, and to desire are human, while to maintain a monumental, unyielding silence is natural, and to us alien. And inescapably, to propose a poem is to reject nature and landscape as distinct entities and attempt to resolve their silence by peopling places that resist peopling. Thoreau, on an errand comparable to the census-taker's, found the Maine wilderness more resistant than he had expected, more resolutely nonhuman than he had imagined:

> It was a relief to get back to our smooth, but still varied landscape. For a permanent residence, it seemed to me that there could be no comparison between this and the wilderness, necessary as the latter is for a resource and a background, the raw material of all our civilization. The wilderness is simple, almost to barrenness. The partially cultivated country it is which chiefly has inspired, and will continue to inspire, the strains of poets, such as compose the mass of any literature. . . . A civilized man . . . with his ideas and associations, must at length pine there, like a cultivated plant, which clasps its fibers about a crude and undissolved mass of peat.[11]

Frost, when he is not apocalyptic (as in "Fire and Ice"), is almost consistently Thoreauvian; but in this poem, I must repeat, civilization is not the fact of inhabitation but the fact of consciousness. The speaker's insistence on humanist values distinguishes him from the landscape he temporarily inhabits, empowers him to read and understand the signs of former inhabitation, and enables him to confront the crux of meditation, the possibility of exerting his voice not to intimidate the wilderness (it cannot be intimidated) but to express once again the human stance against silence, against noncommunion. Even the speaker's "melancholy of having to count souls / Where they grow fewer and fewer every year" is affirmative, but that the melancholy should be "extreme where they [the souls] shrink to none at all" triggers the census-taker's declaration: "It must be I want life to go on living."

Frost is no Wordsworth. His epiphanies occur to spite nature, to fling humanist values in the face of that monumental indifference.

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Wordsworth well understood how separately the human imagination stood from nature, but whereas he read nature as the census-taker reads the relics in the cottage, Frost insists almost to a Blakean degree on the primacy of the inhabiting voice as the source of knowledge and insight. The protagonist of "The Most of It" begins by understanding that "He . . . kept the universe alone," and if he had fully recognized the truth of that he would not have expected to raise a voice in nature in reply. Unlike the census-taker, he receives an echo, but the sign, the embodiment that is the swimming buck, has nothing to say to him. Its attributes are those that are proper to it, but they are the attributes of the nonhuman world—power, monumentality, and a certain unrelenting purpose. No "counter-love" need be expected, and this is Frost's reply to Wordsworth, who even in the shadow of great, indifferent forms sometimes experienced a communion Frost cannot entertain:

> And as I rose upon the stroke my boat
> Went heaving through the water like a swan—
> When from behind that craggy steep, till then
> The bound of the horizon, a huge cliff,
> As if with voluntary power instinct,
> Upreared its head. I struck, and struck again,
> And growing still in stature, the huge cliff
> Rose up between me and the stars, and still
> With measured motion, like a living thing
> Strode after me.[12]

Frost would not allow a cliff to stride after him like a living thing; but even indifference is a personifying quality, and the wilderness in "The Census-Taker" is partly the product of human effort, of logging, and the census-taker cannot help but reclaim, to some degree, that wasteland through contemplation. In that act lies his power over what he sees; the spirit of New England is the spirit of human consciousness contemplating the howling wilderness, whether inhabited by the devil, by hostile or at least unchristian Indians, or simply by an imperturbable silence.

The speaker of "The Census-Taker" is distinct from what he beholds and in that distinction lies his humanity. He wields speech like a lucky charm, and postulates that whoever is hidden in this wilderness—whether the ghosts or the corporeal bodies of past inhabitants, or himself, most especially—might speak and declare that this place should *not* be accounted a desert, should instead be accounted an inhabited place, or at least a place of presence. And in the extremity of his own grief, his melancholy of finding no "souls" to count (much as

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a Puritan minister might have found himself in extremity at finding no converted saints to call upon) the census-taker declares himself quintessentially human and peoples forever this place by declaring that here, in this otherwise uninhabited wasteland, he can understand that he wants "life" against all clear signs of abandonment "to go on living."

[1] Frank Lentricchia, *Robert Frost: Modern Poetics and the Landscapes of Self* (Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 1975), p. 80.

[2] Robert Frost, *Mountain Interval* (New York: Holt, 1916), pp. 38–39. In the absence of a properly edited collected poems I have elected to cite Frost's poems from their original editions.

[3] Robert Frost, *A Further Range* (New York: Holt, 1936), p. 48.

[4] Robert Frost, *Selected Letters* (New York: Holt, 1964), p. 221.

[5] Robert Frost, *North of Boston* (New York: Holt, 1914), p. 134.

[6] Robert Frost, *New Hampshire* (New York: Holt, 1923), pp. 24–26.

[7] Lentricchia, *Robert Frost,* p. 80

[8] Wallace Stevens, *Collected Poems* (New York: Knopf, 1955,), p. 76.

[9] Richard Poirier, *Robert Frost: The Work of Knowing* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), p. 153.

[10] Robert Frost, *A Witness Tree* (New York: Holt, 1942), p. 23.

[11] Henry David Thoreau, *The Maine Woods* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1974), p. 134.

[12] William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (New York: Norton, 1979), p. 50.

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Oedipal Fantasy and Arrested Development in *The Good Soldier*

Bruce Bassoff

The Good Soldier is narrated by John Dowell, "an aging American with very little knowledge of life,"[1] whose limitations as a narrator have been debated in a considerable critical literature. But Dowell is really a caricature of tendencies that one sees in all the other characters: as "the laziest man in Philadelphia" (p. 15)—and anywhere else, for that matter—Dowell exaggerates the inertia of people like Florence, Nancy, and the Ashburnhams, who cannot help repeating their scenarios of misunderstanding and betrayal; as a sentimentalist unable to see things for what they are, he exaggerates the others' tendency to talk like a book; as a man who has no self except the one which he acquires through Florence and the one with which he identifies in Edward Ashburnham, he exaggerates the others' tendency to elicit their "characters" from each other. By using Dowell in this way, Ford reverses the strategy one sees often in Henry James: to use various characters in a tale or a novel as (sometimes conflicting) projections of the protagonist. Dowell, instead, distills the tendencies of others. By presenting Dowell, moreover, as a kind of passive-aggressive Oedipus, Ford is able to evoke the arrested development that he sees pervading his culture.

For one thing, Dowell parodies the anxious desire we see in the other characters for an eternal order to which they can belong. It is this desire that underlies his many (and pejorative) comments about Leonora's Catholicism—something he knows virtually nothing about (he even believes that "Corpus Christi" is a Saint's day). His real concern is expressed by the general category of "Nonconformists," which he uses to include everyone who is not quite right in "temperament," but

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not to include himself even though he is a Quaker (with ironically little of his sect's "inner light"). He is a Conformist who, having found, he thinks, an eternal order in the "minuet" he shares with his wife and the Ashburnhams (p. 6), never entirely relinquishes the illusion of this order even when he perceives its rottenness:

> And, if you come to think of it, isn't it a little odd that the physical rottenness of at least two pillars of our four-square house never presented itself to my mind as a menace to its security? It doesn't so present itself now even though the two of them are actually dead. I don't know. . . . (p. 7)

To be "good people," as Dowell phrases it, is to take certain things for granted, and to adhere stubbornly to moral and social clichés that make certain happenings "unthinkable" (pp. 219, 242). But the other characters also long for such an order—one embodied in the church in which Leonora, Maisie, and Nancy get their instruction, and parodied by Edward's "sentimental gurglings." Outside the convent in which she grew up, for example, Nancy wants to live forever with Edward and Leonora, whose relationship, she thinks, is perfect and immutable. Edward, moreover, is her savior: "It must have been as if a god had approved her handwork or a king her loyalty" (p. 112). When Nancy, goaded by disillusionment and by Edward's death, goes mad, she still repeats over and over: *"Credo in unum Deum Omnipotentem"* (p. 234).

Dowell, who begins the book with a self-conscious declaration of his storytelling role, "This is the saddest story I have ever heard," also parodies the other characters' tendency to talk like books. Dowell, who wants to be a real character in his story with real emotions, tells us, for example, that he loved Nancy very much and that Leonora knew it (p. 247), but he sounds as if he is repeating lines that have no meaning for him. Earlier, in fact, he tells us that he "wanted to marry her [Nancy] as some people want to go to Carcassonne" (p. 121). If his velleities do not really allow him to be the character he wants to be, Edward Ashburnham has a bit more success. Like Don Quixote, whose "virgin intelligence" (p. 137) was also filled with romantic fiction, Ashburnham learns to be himself by learning to be a character in a book (the literary quality of which Dowell judges according to his own feelings). Like Don Quixote with the whores of roadside inns, Ashburnham tries to convince the mercenary La Dolciquita, "a reasonable creature without an ounce of passion in her," that "salvation can only be found in true love and the feudal system" (pp. 160–61).

Even when Edward expresses what is presumably his deepest anguish, he seems to be repeating lines written for him by someone else:

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"I am so desperately in love with Nancy Rufford that I am dying of it" (p. 250). Leonora, who says to Nancy, "Edward's dying—because of you" (p. 215), has presumably read the same book. She goes on to say, "He's worth more than either of us," as she plays (with some *self*-deception also) the noble, self-sacrificing heroine in order to induce Nancy to destroy Edward's romantic hope. Before this, however, she says, like Emma Bovary, "Oh, where are all the bright, happy, innocent beings in the world? Where's happiness? One reads of it in books!" (p. 46).[2]

Although Edward admires Leonora because she plays her role with such courage and efficiency, he cannot connect emotionally with her because she does not have the dark and mysterious mournfulness of the romantic heroine who must give him the "character" that he seeks. Nancy, for example, "made him out like a cross between Lohengrin and the Chevalier Bayard" (pp. 95–96). But a "character" that can be "made" or given can also be taken away—all the more vengefully if that "character" is betrayed by ignoble behavior: "He sat still and let Leonora take away his character and let Leonora damn him to deepest hell [the Pirandello-like hell of an actor who has lost his character], without stirring a finger" (p. 246). The romantic heroine, Nancy, is also a creature of literature—of Roman Catholic literature, to begin with: "I thought . . . I never imagined. . . . Aren't marriages sacraments? Aren't they indissoluble? I thought you were married . . . and . . ." (p. 220). Her sexual experiences, however, are so coded in romantic terms that they approach verbal unreality. In recollection of "chance passages in chance books," for example, Nancy experiences a "withering up in the vitals," though she has not the slightest idea what the "vitals" are (pp. 223, 225). In response to Leonora's sophistry, she tells Edward that she is ready to "belong" to him, though "she didn't in the least know what it meant—to belong to a man" (p. 242).[3]

Dowell's own "character" depends on the one he attributes to Ashburnham, who becomes his model:

> For I can't conceal from myself the fact that I loved Edward Ashburnham—and that I love him because he was just myself. If I had had the courage and the virility and possibly also the physique of Edward Ashburnham I should, I fancy, have done much what he did. (p. 253)

The real qualities of Edward Ashburnham aside, Dowell, from the beginning of their acquaintance, identifies with and aspires to an ideal masculine charisma so complete and self-sufficient that women are drawn vertiginously to it:

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> It was most amazing [a word associated with the pathetic innocence of another character]. You know the man on the stage who throws up sixteen balls at once and they all drop into pockets all over his person, on his shoulders, on his heels, on the inner side of his sleeves; and he stands perfectly still and does nothing. Well, it [Ashburnham's sexual charisma] was like that. (pp. 28–29)

A great advantage of this ideal, moreover, is that Dowell can imagine that only a small change—like the one that reverses the flow of fortune in gambling—is necessary for his own passivity to become equally powerful: "I suppose that I should really like to be a polygamist; with Nancy, and with Leonora, and with Maisie Maidan, and possibly even with Florence" (p. 237)—the women with whom Ashburnham has been associated. But Dowell's overestimation of his model is such that his desire is never fully drawn to the women designated by Ashburnham but remains partially fixed on Ashburnham himself: "I have only followed, faintly, and in my unconscious desires, Edward Ashburnham" (p. 237), he says with unconscious double meaning.

This extreme idealization points to a fundamental problem that besets all the characters to one degree or another: since religion and other social idealisms do not hold together their lives, they idealize and idolize one another. Nancy regards Edward as a knight in shining armor and Leonora as another Virgin Mary. When both figures begin to show chinks in their armor, Nancy does not change her ideas in order to make them accord better with reality; she simply internalizes the values she personified in her guardians. Like the knight in shining armor, she will rescue her mother from destitution and Edward from death; and like the Virgin Mary she will sublimate her own sexuality to a higher purpose. In both instances she will outdo her former mentors. For his part, Edward idealizes Nancy as a romantic heroine, as he idealized Leonora and Maisie, but he cannot solve the contradiction entailed by his desire: that he wants *both* passion and inaccessibility. For this reason he reveres Leonora for her "clean-limbed" efficiency and courage but hates her for the coldness with which they are manifested. He resists Nancy's naive offer of herself, which Leonora has manipulated her into making, for he realizes how ambivalent it is: a tribute, on the one hand, to the god he has been for her, and a contemptuous offer to the man Leonora has exposed. In addition, he has learned repeatedly that the women who do become accessible to him can only disappoint him eventually—like the pages of a book that has become familiar (p. 115).

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What Dowell's extreme neediness points up in these relationships is that romantic desire is deviated religion. The lover aims beyond the other to some *metaphysical* ideal, something equivalent to the fullness and self-sufficiency of God. The other has an exchange value that displaces his value as a real person; he becomes, as Dowell says about Florence, "a problem in Algebra" (p. 120). "To have all that and to be all that!" Dowell exclaims about the Ashburnhams, who seem perfect to him, as they do to Nancy and to Maisie Maidan (p. 9). To *be* anything, Dowell must *have* the metaphysical qualities that he attributes to people like them—qualities signified by their apparent *self*-possession. Dowell's attraction to women like Florence and Nancy is neither sexual nor personal but impersonal and proprietorial, and the lack of sexual consummation helps them maintain their value: "For in Florence I had at once a wife and an unattained mistress . . . and in the retaining of her in this world I had my occupation, my career, my ambition" (p. 49). If for Ashburnham Florence is a difficult turn to be made in a polo match (p. 29), for Dowell she is a trophy, a symbol of the athlete's "chastity, his soberness, his abstentions, and of his inflexible will [which Dowell confuses with purpose]. Of intrinsic value as a wife, I think she had none at all for me" (pp. 91–92).

Since the other's prestige has little to do with any real qualities, it is subject to sudden change or reversal. If Dowell, for example, attributes to Florence a special light, a special brilliance, so that she becomes "positively electric" at times (p. 43), that brilliance is extinguished for him as soon as he learns of her sexual misadventure: he depicts her as looking "with a puzzled expression" at an electric-light bulb over her deathbed (p. 120). Immediately thereafter the nun-like Nancy takes her place in Dowell's affections. To use also the imagery of accounting that Dowell inadvertently suggests, when Florence's capital is exhausted, Nancy's is there to be drawn on:

> It [the question of whether Florence is dead or alive] simply didn't *interest* me. Florence didn't *matter*. I suppose you will retort that I was in love with Nancy Rufford and that my indifference was therefore dis*credit*able. Well, I am not seeking to avoid dis*credit*. (p. 121, emphasis mine)

The prestige involved is so abstract that Nancy's mad cry of "shuttlecock" provides an apt image for it. Not only does it shift from person to person—like the kudos disputed by Homeric warriors—but it can be used as a weapon in the power struggles between people. Leonora, for example, punishes Edward with Nancy's "presence" (p. 212)—with the idealized purity that he can only relinquish or lose. By

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forcing Nancy on Edward, Leonora wants to destroy the abstract value she has for him, as well as the abstract value he had for her.

In the midst of this "maze" (p. 183) of illusion and conflict is the figure of "Maisie Maidan," Edward's (forcibly) platonic love interest, who dies stereotypically of a broken heart. Her naïveté, which is displayed in her farewell note ("Oh, Mrs. Ashburnham, you knew the world and I knew nothing" [p. 74]), is reflected in the novel's frequent and punning variations on her name. Dowell's unconscious desire to marry Nancy, for example, is "a very amazing thing—amazing for the light of possibilities that it casts into the human heart" (p. 103). And the same naïveté is found in another "maidan," Nancy Rufford, who becomes a living riddle—a picture of perfect health and propriety signifying nothing (p. 254). Even earlier, she is surrounded by paradoxes that suggest something that is out of kilter: she is at times "exceedingly grotesque and at times extraordinarily beautiful"; she is tortured in appearance and yet possessed of "a quite extraordinary sense of fun"; she is a "miracle of patience who could be almost miraculously impatient"; and her education has been a "mixture of saturnalia and discipline" (pp. 123–24). What is the "clue" (p. 183) to this maze? What is the "key"?

> She [Maisie] had died so grotesquely that her little body had fallen forward into the trunk, and it had closed upon her, like the jaws of a gigantic alligator. The key was in her hand. Her dark hair . . . had come down and covered her body and her face. (p. 76)

The key in this Freudian emblem is phallic and debunks the benefits of civilization: "Now our renunciations have failed us," writes Philip Rieff; "less and less is given back bettered."[4] When Dowell talks about the sacrifice of personal preference that one owes civilization, he calls it "the cock that the whole of this society owes to Aesculapius" (pp. 36–37). But he himself is impotent, and Nancy's cry of "shuttlecocks" suggests an extreme form of that sacrifice.

In fact, images of castration are everywhere in the novel. Nancy's sense of rectitude is described as "a knife that looked out of her eyes and that spoke with her voice" (p. 125), and both Nancy's mother and Leonora are "cutting" (p. 126). Dowell imagines a scene in which the "good people" gouge out each other's eyes "with carving knives" (p. 249). That sexual castration is also an analogue for social castration is shown by the fact that Nancy can be "unmanned" by her father's voice (p. 129), and by the fact that in the photo Edward sees of the innocent Leonora—raised, like Maisie Maidan and Nancy Rufford, in a

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convent—the branches of a biblical apple tree "cut right across her face, which is all but invisible" (p. 138)—like that of Maisie in her death. Edward, who chooses this invisible face among the seven daughters available to him,[5] wants to believe in the "chastity of Leonora's imagination" (p. 57)—a castration, so to speak, of her potential as a grown woman. Ironically, it will be Leonora who castrates Edward by wresting control of his estate from him and by taking away his "character." When the demoralized Edward kills himself at the end, "quite a small penknife" is all the phallic equipment he has left (p. 256).[6]

The stymied energy and growth that Ford suggests through these images of castration is also suggested by the "family romance" that pervades the book: a pattern of arrested development. All of the relationships in the story have an incestuous quality. Leonora, for example, looks at Dowell the way a mother looks at her son or a sister looks at her brother (p. 33); Edward and Leonora are father and mother to both Nancy and Maisie (pp. 63–64); and Edward feels "quite fatherly" toward the nursemaid he kisses (p. 150). All of this reminds one of Stephen Dedalus' definition of incest as "an avarice of the emotions"[7]—a refusal, that is, to let one's emotions extend beyond a closed circle of people, values, or ideas. This is Dowell's eternal minuet, and the round table to which Florence refers at the beginning of the two couples' acquaintanceship: "And so the whole round table is begun" (p. 33).

Like an oedipal scenario, Dowell's vision of judgment is that of "three figures, two of them clasped close in an intense embrace, and one intolerably solitary" (p. 70). Although Florence is the solitary figure in this vision, each character fulfills that role equally well since each in turn feels excluded from happiness by the others. For this reason, for example, Leonora comes to hate Edward and Nancy and wants to destroy their "final virtue" (p. 203). For this reason also Dowell's admiration for Ashburnham is contaminated by a good deal of resentment: "You see, I suppose he regarded me not so much as a man. I had to be regarded as a woman or a solicitor" (p. 28). That Dowell secretly *wants* to be treated as a woman by Ashburnham makes the latter's attitude even more infuriating. When Dowell says that Edward's eyes are "perfectly, perfectly stupid" (p. 28), he is attempting to debunk the quality—Ashburnham's presumed imperturbability—that fascinates him and that excludes him from its privileged domain. When he goes on to talk about the "expression" of those eyes as "sinister," he reveals his ambivalence more clearly.

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At the end Dowell lets Ashburnham die as he earlier let Florence die. Because he does not yet know of his idol's betrayal of him, his attitude toward Ashburnham is different than it was toward Florence, whom he dismissed as a worthless piece of paper. He justifies his abandonment of his idol by the mawkish explanation that Ashburnham deserves to be released from his responsibilities and his sufferings. His claim that Ashburnham is not "wanted in the world" (p. 256) is both an idealized view of him as someone who is too good for the world and a devious rebellion against his overbearing figure. Unlike Oedipus' violent reaction to the arrogant figure at the crossroads, Dowell's reaction is passive-aggressive. Like Oedipus, however, Dowell ends up displacing his rival. As a case of arrested development, in a fantasy of arrested development, in a culture of arrested development, Dowell occupies Ashburnham's house at the end and is the custodian of Ashburnham's beloved.

[1] Ford Madox Ford, *The Good Soldier* (New York: Vintage, 1955), p. 244. Page references will hereafter be included parenthetically in the body of the essay.

[2] For a brilliant analysis of *Edward* as Madame Bovary, see James Cox's "The Finest French Novel in the English Language," *Modern Fiction Studies,* 9, No. 1 (1963), 79–83.

[3] Florence, the most voracious reader in the book, is also the most versatile actress. "Always playacting" (p. 119), she plays the part not only of Ashburnham's mistress, but also the part of Leonora's friend and confidante, who wants to use her good offices to bring the married couple back together.

[4] Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic* (New York: Harper, 1966), p. 5.

[5] This combination of seven daughters and a suitor who likes to go hunting suggests the mythical Pleiades being chased by Orion.

[6] One of the funnier Freudian jokes in the book is the scrap of paper Florence points to in the couples' educational trip to Marburg. As Carol Jacobs points out, the Articles of Marburg were the result of days of argument between Luther and Zwingli about the reading of the phrase "This is my body"—a phrase that Florence restores to vulgar literalness during the trip. See Carol Jacobs, "The (too) Good Soldier," *Glyph,* 3 (1978), 43.

[7] James Joyce, *Ulysses* (New York: Random House, 1986), p. 169.

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A Temporary Marriage of Two Minds: T. S. and Vivien Eliot

Loretta Johnson

The marriage between T. S. and Vivien Eliot is usually considered an ill-fated, frustrated, and miserable one with Vivien Eliot as the haughty, hysterical, vulgar, and impossible wife. Virginia Woolf is typical in her observation: "But oh—Vivienne! Was there ever such a torture since life began,—to bear her on one's shoulders, biting, wriggling, raving, scratching, unwholesome, powdered, insane. . . . This bag of ferrets is what Tom wears round his neck."[1] Lyndall Gordon says, "I cannot help suspecting . . . that her nervous, hysterical, unsympathetic nature contributed substantially to their unhappiness."[2] Peter Ackroyd sums up the generally accepted view that Vivien Eliot had become a hopeless burden on the hapless husband: "For Eliot there seemed to be no escape: however often he spent weekends away, and however frequently Vivien visited sanatoria in England or Europe, her condition was the fundamental fact of his life."[3]

From first-hand observations to recent speculations, the view of the marriage has focused primarily on Vivien Eliot's bad health and her negative influence on her husband's ability to work. With the exception of a few observations, such as Bridget Patmore's, which depicts the couple joining her for a Sunday afternoon of ballroom dancing, there are few testimonies of a happy marriage.[4]

For the short period between 1921 and 1925, however, there was at least a marriage of the minds in which they shared and influenced each other's work. Eliot handed his "Waste Land" manuscript over to her for her editing and revision and both worked on the contributions Vivien Eliot was to make to her husband's *Criterion*. The most notable

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contribution Vivien Eliot made was her work on *The Waste Land,* specifically "The Game of Chess" section. Her small role in the making of this poem has been overshadowed by Ezra Pound's, but she made crucial and successful editorial changes. Although Pound excised approximately one-third of the poem (parts of which show up later in a sketch by Vivien Eliot in the *Criterion*), she made cuts of her own and inserted lines for substitution.[5]

Vivien Eliot and Pound, whose editorial comments stand side by side in the manuscripts, agreed on similar points. They were not impressed by the portrait of the woman in the "Chair . . . like a burnished throne." "Don't see what you had in mind here," Vivien Eliot wrote. Pound's comment was "Too tum-pum at a stretch." They both agreed about the second part of this section. "Wonderful," she wrote in bold letters next to the stanzas beginning with "My nerves are bad tonight." "Yes & wonderful wonderful" (*F,* p. 14). Her own work later showed her interest in the subjects of anxiety, misunderstanding, and isolation. Valerie Eliot notes that Vivien Eliot requested the removal of the line "The ivory men make company between us." Eliot apparently granted her request, but inserted the line again, by memory, when he wrote out a fair copy in 1959 (*F,* p. 126).

Vivien Eliot edited the pub scene by adding colloquialisms that did not come naturally to Eliot. She contributed the line, "If you don't like it you can get on with it." This is more convincing than Eliot's "No, ma'am, you needn't look old-fashioned at me." She wrote the line "It's that medicine I took, in order to bring it off." And she gave him "What you get married for if you don't want children," as a substitute for "You want to keep him at home, I suppose" (*F,* pp. 10–11).

She had also suggested that the language in the scene be written as it sounds. "Something of that" should be written as "Somethink o' that," she noted. But Eliot wrote back in the margin, "I want to avoid trying to show pronunciation by spelling." He did, however, change some of the "Good night's" into "Goonight" to effect the sound of slurred speech. Vivien Eliot greatly admired these last lines. "Splendid last lines," she wrote (*F,* pp. 13–15).

These changes to *The Waste Land* are the most obvious examples of collaboration between husband and wife. There are others, however, that become apparent by studying "The Papers of Vivienne Haigh Eliot" in the Bodleian Library and Vivien Eliot's published work in the *Criterion.* Ackroyd notes that Vivien Eliot described her work as "flash in the pan," but the pieces that appeared in the *Criterion* "were, nevertheless, experiments in prose and dialogue that Eliot took a keen

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interest in. . . . Eliot would go over her work with her, sometimes adding phrases or changing sentences. . . . Vivien Eliot herself suggested that they collaborate in the stories, together with Eliot's secretary, Irene Fassett."[6]

All of Vivien Eliot's published work appeared in the *Criterion* between 1924 and 1925 (see Appendix, below). There were twelve contributions—sketches, short stories, letters, reviews, and a poem—by authors with names beginning with the initials "F. M." Eliot explained in a letter to Ada Leverson in 1925, "I believe you must have guessed that all the contributions signed by F— M— are by Vivien Eliot and although the secret's not out yet, I have no objection to your knowing in confidence."[7]

Early reviewers of the *Criterion* did not know the secret nor did they have much praise for the unestablished F. M. The *London Times Literary Supplement* review of the issue containing "Thé Dansant" and "Mrs. Pilkington" overlooks her work altogether. "Among the purely literary contributions, which include several brief tales or sketches of merit, the most remarkable are by D. H. Lawrence and John Shand."[8] The review of the next issue containing Vivien Eliot's "Diary of the Rive Gauche," mentions short stories, but not hers. In summarizing the *Criterion* the reviewer notes, "There are stories by Mr. Alexander Porterfield, Mr. Eliot and Miss Edith Sitwell," but he says nothing of F. M.[9]

Even with Eliot's byline, Vivien Eliot's work does not receive praise. The story "On the Eve" by "Thomas Eliot" appears to have been written by Vivien Eliot and then revised by Eliot. Kirk says "much of its first draft had been the work of Vivienne Eliot, and it was a literary form in which Eliot did not persevere. Its theme is the phenomenon of the rich and well-connected anarchist."[10] "On the Eve" is about the political situation preceding the General Election of 1923. Horace, Alexander, and Agatha (characters who show up in Vivien Eliot's unpublished stories) are enjoying a light supper served by Rose, the maid. They lament the state of affairs brought about by the Labour Party and the financial uncertainty they face. Alexander cries out: " 'No election matters now. The best we can hope for, the only thing that can save us, is a dictator.' 'Good old Mussolini,' shouted Agatha."[11] It is difficult to tell whose politics are expressed in this story. C. B. Cox says, "It's not clear how we're supposed to respond to this, and there's much ambiguity in such early references to fascism." Cox did not know that Vivien Eliot had a hand in this story when he says that "On the Eve" is "as bad as those written by his third-rate female contributors."[12]

Herbert Howarth, also unaware of Vivien Eliot's authorship, notes:

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> In 1924, 1925, and 1926 the *Criterion* contains contributions that seem editorial ineptitudes until we realize that they are shots—bosh shots but the first range-finding shots—of this technique. The queerest of them all is by Eliot himself. . . . It arises from an idea he had disclosed to Arnold Bennett in September 1924 for "a drama of modern life (furnished flat sort of people) in a rhythmic prose." Its purpose is clear in the perspective of thirty-three years. It demonstrates the author's ear for people speaking, his gift for reproducing drawing-room gabble. But the story form does not suit him; it must have been a puzzle in 1925, and a disappointment to the poet, who dropped the form, not realizing how close he had veered toward his ultimate comic method. But that he was feeling for a method is shown by his publication of comparable pieces—for example, two stories by Feiron Morris, "Thé Dansant" in October 1924 and "Night Club" in April 1925, and a cocktail-party story by Aldous Huxley, "The Monocle," in January 1926.[13]

When it became known that Vivien Eliot was the author behind the F. M. pseudonyms, critics were somewhat more generous. Russell Kirk refers to her stories as "a half-dozen flirtatious vignettes."[14] T. S. Matthews remarks that she was a "writer of felicity and charm" and notes that Eliot "once said of her that she was the only woman he knew who had a mind like a man."[15] Robert Sencourt says that her "stories are lightly written little accounts of random encounters . . . they do show a degree of imitative literary competence, of the kind that might well produce acceptable commercial fiction." Sencourt takes them to be evidence, however, of Eliot's pity for her and his futile hopes that her writing would help to cure her illnesses. "Yet, for what ever reason, Eliot was publishing these extremely slight pieces in his great European review, placing two or even three in each issue, in a way that one can only regard as both touching and disconcerting."[16]

Gordon is not overly critical: "Her sketches . . . are all emotionally alive and critically observant, with a clever choice of detail reminiscent of Katherine Mansfield."[17] Eliot was, it turns out, her most complimentary critic. He wrote to Russell when these pieces were coming out in the *Criterion*: "She writes *extremely* well (stories, etc.) and [with] great originality. And I can never escape from the spell of her persuasive (even coercive) gift of argument."[18]

Neither husband nor wife could escape each other's influence in their choice of images and subject matter. Both, for example, use the hyacinth as a phallic, fragrant symbol of spring. In "Letters of the Moment," F. M. writes: "My hyacinths are bursting clumsily out of their

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pots, as they always do, coming into misshapen bloom before their time." These hyacinths remind her of a better spring, an earlier beginning, set in the vague light of the past:

> What happy meetings, what luminous conversations in twilight rooms filled with the scent of hyacinths, await me now? The uncompromising voice of truth inside me answers, None at all. For I am not the same person who once played—as it seems to one—a leading part in those spring fantasies.[19]

The leading part in those spring fantasies may allude to the role of the hyacinth girl in "The Waste Land":

> "You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;
> "They called me the hyacinth girl."
> —Yet when we came back, late, from the hyacinth garden,
> Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
> Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
> Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
> Looking into the heart of light, the silence.[20]

Hyacinths for both writers figure in a romanticized past. Forced hyacinths, however, signify that something is wrong. For Vivien Eliot, they are clumsy and out of their natural time. For Eliot, who used the image in 1928 in "A Song for Simeon," the hyacinths growing indoors are removed from time and the seasons: "Lord, the Roman hyacinths are blooming in bowls and / The winter sun creeps by the snow hills."[21] Their distance from the natural order of things now signifies spiritual isolation and martyrdom.

Another image that appears in both writers' works is the "essential spring," a spiritual season that occurs before the end of winter. It means personal loneliness for Vivien Eliot:

> And this is the essential spring—spring in winter, spring in London, grey and misty spring, grey twilights, piano organs, flower women at street crossings. No carnivals, no battles of flowers, this is no public exhibition. (*LMI,* p. 220)

This "essential spring," which precedes the public and natural display of life and rebirth, anticipates Eliot's "midwinter spring" that occurs later in "Little Gidding":

> Midwinter spring is its own season
> Sempiternal though sodden towards sundown,
> Suspended in time, between pole and tropic.
> . . . There is no earth smell
> Or smell of living thing. This is the springtime
> But not in time's covenant . . . (*LMI,* p. 214)

Eliot's "midwinter spring," however, is not of this earth. For Vivien Eliot

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it was a personal moment of pure vulnerability. For Eliot it is a spiritual time beyond the realm of personal pain.

Both writers brought up the disparate subjects of Restoration drama and Bernard Shaw, which Eliot had linked together in a review. In "Letters of the Moment," F. M. had gone to see Wycherley's *Country Wife,* one of the "dusty old plays" and "tawdry bawdry Caroline renovations" that was playing at the Mermaid.[22] In a review in the previous issue of the *Criterion* Eliot had written that Wycherley's plays were "interesting and valuable experiences" in understanding the significant distance between present morality and "the conventional morality of the seventeenth-century comedy. . . . The plays of the Restoration record an ethic in some ways as remote from our own as is that of Mr. Bernard Shaw."[23]

Eliot believed that it was essential to leave behind the romanticism of the nineteenth century that he believed continued to exist in the work of Shaw. "Shaw stands in fact for 'the great middle-class liberalism,' " which had seen its day, according to Eliot, and Shaw was "merely" an object "for the paleontologist." Shaw belonged "to a final stage of individualism, an age in which there was no society."[24] In a review of *St. Joan,* Eliot said that the play was a sacrilege. Shaw's characterization of Joan of Arc was to "turn her into a great middle-class reformer, and her place is a little higher than that of Mrs. Pankhurst," not a saint but a suffragist.[25] A *TLS* reviewer of this *Criterion* issue remarked that "A strong anti-romantic and counter-revolutionary tendency pervades this number."[26]

F. M., as a gossiping, ambiguous persona, had initially been charmed by Shaw's middle-class appeal. She had seen him at the Mermaid where Wycherley's *Country Wife* was playing and she expresses her hopes that he will understand her:

> On the Monday afternoons of the Mermaid the one point of light in the great gloom cast by an audience made up of bored members of the profession, unkempt sub-editors (of monthlies) goggling over the gallery rail, and ladies from Hampstead who have met there for a good talk and a cup of tea, will be the light shining behind the face of Bernard Shaw. For there is a light behind the face of Bernard Shaw, as anyone who cares to look may see. Why do I always feel when I see Bernard Shaw that I must go up to him and take his hand and tell him all about the winter's isolation . . . and how one started life by being a beautiful Princess admired and worshipped by all men and living in a house of rosy glass through which one watched the envious

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> world go by and how one is cast out of the glass house and wants to get back, inside, safe and beautiful and secure.

Then she later rejects this romantic sentiment and admits that it is an

> extraordinary piece of female perversity to want to hold the hand of Mr. Shaw—Mr. Shaw, of all people in the world—and tell him that. And knowing absolutely as one does that no one would be more bored and irritated by such a recital as he.
>
> Just for one thing—to take the least important reason, as one always does—because no Irishman in this world ever cared about anyone's personal troubles, and indeed to an Irishman "our" troubles have no sort of reality at all. (*LMI*, p. 222)

F. M. goes on to say that the Wycherley play inspired her to write some poetry, which turns out to be an early version of the heroic couplets that were excised from "The Waste Land." According to Valerie Eliot, "It probably amused Eliot to print 'these few poor verses' knowing that only two other people knew their source." (*F*, p. 127).

This version describes "white-armed Fresca," "amorous Fresca" who "dreams of love in curious shapes." The excised version depicts Lady Fresca dreaming of "pleasant rapes" and reading about rape in Richardson, while she relieves herself. The only common line in the two versions is Fresca admiring a hard-boiled egg: "Her hands caress the egg's well rounded dome." In addition to the poem there are also two paragraphs written by Eliot in the "Letter." They end with a parody of "Prufrock": "if one had said, yawning and settling a shawl, 'O no, I did not like the *Sacre* at all, not at all' " (*F*, p. 127).

All of Vivien Eliot's contributions to the *Criterion* contain female characters who address the problems of loneliness, independence, and the possibilities of love. Vivien Eliot's strongest female character is "Sibylla," who appears in "Thé Dansant," "Night Club," and "Fête Galante." There may be something of the self-portrait in these characters; Vivien Eliot had certainly experienced disappointments in her marriage and grappled continuously with her desire to dominate Eliot and her inclinations to be free. In these stories we also see glimpses of Eliot, or at least portraits of the American in Europe, as viewed by a smart, young British woman.

In "Thé Dansant," Sibylla is the nervous and dominating friend of Felice and their docile companion, Mike. Although Sibylla is spirited and charismatic, she is incapable of handling simple social situations smoothly. Comfortable in her self-appointed role as leader, Sibylla dances with both Felice and Mike, dictating when they may dance with

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each other. While they are dancing, Sibylla is caught off guard by an "intruder" who asks her to dance:

> Sibylla had expected it—but from the left—and was very genuinely startled. She turned her head round so sharply that she wrenched a tendon at the back of her neck. For an instant the pain was so intense that she lost control. "Oh," she exclaimed loudly and abruptly, "Oh, good heavens, you gave me quite a fright! . . . I don't suppose I shall be able to dance properly with you now," she said, turning round to him, "I've given my neck such a frightful crick; but I'll try."

Sibylla walks painfully to the dance floor, but she is anxious for Felice and Mike to see her. "How surprised and Oh how *furious* they would be," she says.[27]

Once her friends see that she has been asked to dance by an outsider, she hastens to embarrass him about his French accent and to leave him in triumph. After the dance "Sibylla seized a very small black hat and dashed her head into it" and rushed out with her two followers scrambling after her. In this last scene, she explains: " 'But I wanted to get out of it quickly. I don't mind a pick up in the right place, but not marching home with you and finding out where you live and so on.' The others most heartily agreed" (*TD,* p. 78). In her characterization of Sibylla, Vivien Eliot has created a modern Sybil who lives in an invisible cage of self-protection. Sibylla in her independence shields herself from society and is careful not to be undone by love.

The cold-hearted Sibylla appears again in "Night Club" by Feiron Morris. She explains to her naive suitor that love is not to be tolerated. " 'Love,' she said, 'why there isn't such a thing nowadays that I know of. You're out of date. Nobody wants *love*' . . . 'nobody gets it either, for that matter.' "[28] Sibylla refuses to be hurt and, therefore, refuses her suitor's advances. She feels experienced in the ways of love and is merely protecting him from what she herself has endured. She has learned that understanding of another individual is not to be had.

> "Who wants to be understood? Not me for one. I hate people who are always round understanding you. It bores me to tears to be understood. Besides, there's nothing to understand that I know of—can't we dance this?" (*NC,* p. 402)

Sibylla is not likely to be found saying, "No that is not what I meant at all, not at all." When she meets some older, more sophisticated friends at the night club, she leaves with them, without so much as an explanation to her mystified companion.

In the two installments of "Diary of the Rive Gauche," Vivien Eliot

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creates her most humorous and successful characterization of the modern, independent woman. She is Fanny Marlow, a Briton in Paris as disdainful of others as they are of her. And yet they are all more sensitive than the American, who approaches Fanny in the salon of her French pension:[29]

> "I'm an American," he tells me most unnecessarily; "and I made the acquaintance of Miss Newton at the Soirée last Friday at the Consulate. I asked her if she would like to go to one of these Latin Quarter balls. They tell me she isn't in the hotel, or anyways they can't find her, so I said I'd wait. I guessed you spoke English and I wondered if you could tell me just what kind of balls these are and whether it's all right to take an American girl without a chaperone to this Bal Bullier place. I didn't want to go get the tickets till I was sure about it. So I hope you'll pardon me addressing you, but I guessed you were English and I thought you could prob'ly tell me all about these sort of places, if anybody could."
>
> Now is this fair? First of all, I have seen his "American girl"—an arch miss of about forty, fresh from Main Street, and I am only—well, never mind, but that's that. Why should I know? Why ask *me? I* am indignant now. There are three indignant people in this salon now. When the American gentleman began to belabour me with his conversation, the middle-aged person in black became more indignant than ever. She began to tremble with indignation. And the old lady came out of her swoon, and with one look of horror swooned again. (*DRG,* p. 292)

Fanny gathers up her writing materials and retorts to the American:

> "I am sorry," I say, "but I have never been to a ball in Paris." The American actually dared to appear incredulous. "I know nothing whatever about balls in Paris," I continue coldly, and leave the salon with all the dignity I can.
>
> On my way up the five flights of steep stairs I remind myself that I never did understand Americans. I simply do not understand Americans. When I see an American coming I ought to say immediately, "Please do not speak to me, because if you do I shall not understand you. I shall never understand you, so will you please pass on." For instance, why do Americans insist that all European women are *au courant* with every form of vice (to them all pleasure or amusement really means vice, so far as I can see)—whereas they insinuate that the female of their own species is supremely innocent and unsullied. They actually appear to be trying to protect their own women from *us!* Why? Because they cannot cope with European women. Ha! they can't cope with us! (*DRG,* pp. 291–92)

To Vivien Eliot's female characters, and perhaps to herself, the

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American male is an enigma. He is not to be understood. Her heroines often turn, in frustration, to nature to have what they cannot find in human relationships. Every night Fanny takes her "unvaried evening pilgrimage" to a bridge on the Seine, where she looks over the water to the lights and imagines herself happy in her loneliness. In "Fête Galante," Sibylla seeks an empty room at a crowded party to stare at the "gibbous moon" and find peace in her solitude.[30]

The American figures again in "Fête Galante," this time as a famous poet and financier whom Sibylla likes but cannot understand. Sibylla approaches this party with caution. She takes control as she did in "Thé Dansant" and informs her timid friend, Felice, that every move must be calculated. Sibylla has arrived first so they would not have to make an "entrance." "I mean to be too early. Don't want to arrive late, do you, and have everybody staring at you?" (*FG,* p. 557). Despite her efforts, Sibylla cannot control her situation completely. She fails to attract the man she likes, and she is pursued by one who does not interest her. Felice in a pathetic way is more successful. She finds a "little whispering, posing Cambridge undergraduate, who was at the moment, allowing her to possess him" (*FG,* p. 560).

Sibylla had approached the American poet and financier, who, it may be argued, resembles Eliot. Sibylla admits that she has a fascination for him, but she cannot understand why something does not happen between them:

> Sibylla, looking round the room, saw the American financier leaning with exaggerated grace against the eighteenth-century marble fireplace. She went up to him confidently. "Hullo," she said, but he only smiled. "He *is* rather unsatisfactory," Sibylla thought, and, glancing up at him, she was struck afresh by his strange appearance. The heavy, slumbering white face, thickly powdered; the long hooded eyes, unseeing leaden-heavy; the huge protuberant nose, and the somehow inadequate sullen mouth, the lips a little reddened. His head exceptionally large, and not well shaped; the hair thin, and plastered tightly down.
>
> "Yet somehow," she thought, as she watched him, "although in a way he is such a hideous man, he has the air of being good-looking, distinguished-looking anyhow, and I like him, I like him—if only he would—What? What is wrong, what missing?" (*FG,* p. 559)

Matthews says this passage demonstrates "Vivien Eliot's impulses of cruelty" toward Eliot.[31] Gordon notes that the following passage refers to Eliot:

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"Isn't he wonderful?" whispered Felice. "He is the most marvelous poet in the *whole world*."

"He might be if he ever wrote anything," said Sibylla dryly.

"Yes, why *doesn't* he write more?"

"Because he wants to be everything at once, I expect. Perhaps the devil took him up into a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world—unfortunately for him!"

"And, so I suppose," asked Felice naggingly, "that he didn't know which kingdom to choose?"

"He's still up on the mountain, so far as I know," said Sibylla, indifferently. (*FG*, p. 562)

According to Gordon, this passage "accounts for Eliot's block during 1923 and 1924 by his distracting urge to possess all the kingdoms of this world."[32]

In "Necesse Est Perstare?," there is possibly a self-portrait of Vivien Eliot and another glimpse of her husband in a social setting. The female persona is as unimpressed with the guests as Sibylla was at the "fête galante":

And there was an end (for a session)
of the eternal Aldous Huxley—
Elizabeth Bibesco—Clive Bell—
unceasing clamour of inanities.

She yearns to be alone with her husband, who looks like a "very old monkey":

To come stand beside you at the window and
look out at the fleering
cold English sunshine and say,
. . . is it necessary that we go through this?[33]

Marion, in the short story "Mrs. Pilkington," is quite eager to attend parties if she is to be accompanied by Hugh. The problem is that Marion does not know that Hugh does not care to have her in tow. Unlike Sibylla, and perhaps more like Vivien Eliot herself, Marion is naive and vulnerable. She expresses her gratitude to Hugh and her need for him: " 'About the Maillavin party, it is good of you to say you will take me. I do appreciate your goodness to me. Without you and all you stand for where should I be?' "[34] Little did she know that Hugh has planned to leave her:

"For a long time?"
"Probably."
"When did you decide?"
He did not answer.[35]

During the period that Vivien Eliot was composing these sketches,

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she and her husband were trying to find a solution to their marriage. She had become increasingly ill and more dependent on his care than ever. She had lost much of the flair and independence that had originally attracted Eliot to her. Ackroyd notes that Vivien Eliot had become very worried during this period that Eliot would leave her:

> She had reverted to infantile terrors of loneliness; it was a loneliness compounded by the fact that her husband spent much of his time away from her. Now, if he did leave her, he found her in a desperate and half-fainting state on his return. Vivien did not like him out of her sight.[36]

By 1932, Eliot informed Vivien Eliot that he was going to America, but she refused to believe that he would not return to her.

We see in Vivien Eliot's work glimpses of her own life and some of the ideas and interests she shared with her husband. After 1926, she wrote no more for the *Criterion,* but she wrote copiously in her diaries and notebooks. After Eliot left her, she continued to follow her husband and beg him to return. Vivien Eliot never accepted the separation and died as Mrs. T. S. Eliot at the age of sixty in a sanatorium.

Appendix

Vivien Eliot's Publications in the *Criterion*

M., F. "Letters of the Moment, I." 2, No. 6 (Feb. 1924), 220–22; "II." 2, No. 7 (Apr. 1924), 360–64.

———. "*A Man in the Zoo,* by David Garnett; *The Voyage,* by J. Middleton Murry, reviews of." 2, No. 7 (Apr. 1924), 483–86.

———. "*Myrtle,* by Stephen Hudson, review of." 3, No. 11 (Apr. 1925), 475–76.

———. "Necesse Est Perstare." 3, No. 11 (Apr. 1925), 364.

Marlow, Fanny. "A Diary of the Rive Gauche." 3, No. 10 (Jan. 1925), 290–97; and 3, No. 11 (Apr. 1925), 425–29, "to be continued."

———. "Fête Galante." 3, No. 12 (July 1925), 557–63.

Morris, Feiron. "*Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,* by Virginia Woolf, review of." 3, No. 10 (Jan. 1925), 326–29.

———. "Night Club." 3, No. 11 (Apr. 1925), 401–04.

———. "Thé Dansant." 3, No. 9 (Oct. 1924), 72–78.

Morrison, Felix. "Mrs. Pilkington." 3, No. 9 (Oct. 1924), 103–06.

[1] Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf* (New York: Harcourt, 1980), III, 6.

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[2] Lyndall Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), p. 7.

[3] Peter Ackroyd, *T. S. Eliot* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984), p. 185.

[4] Bridget Patmore, *My Friends When Young* (London: Heinemann,1968), pp. 85–86.

[5] Valerie Eliot, ed., *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts* (New York: Harcourt, 1971), pp. 10–15. Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text as *F*.

[6] Ackroyd is referring to a letter from "Vivien Eliot to Sidney Schiff, 31 March 1924, British Library" and "The diaries of Vivien Eliot, 27 March 1935, Bodleian," p. 348.

[7] Berg Collection, New York Public Library.

[8] *Times Literary Supplement,* 30 Oct. 1924, p. 690.

[9] *Times Literary Supplement,* 25 Jan. 1925, p. 511.

[10] Russell Kirk, *Eliot and His Age: T. S. Eliot's Moral Imagination in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Random House, 1971), p. 118.

[11] Vivien Eliot, "On the Eve, A Dialogue," *Criterion,* 3, No. 10 (Jan. 1925), 278–81.

[12] C. B. Cox, "Eliot's *Criterion*," *Spectator,* 25 Aug. 1967, p. 216.

[13] Herbert Howarth, "T. S. Eliot's *Criterion:* The Editor and His Contributors," *Comparative Literature,* 11, No. 2 (Spring 1959), 97–110.

[14] Kirk, *Eliot and His Age,* p. 121.

[15] T. S. Matthews, *Great Tom: Notes Towards the Definition of T. S. Eliot* (New York: Harper, 1974), pp. 83–84.

[16] Robert Sencourt, *T. S. Eliot: A Memoir,* Donald Adamson, ed. (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1971), p. 85.

[17] Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years,* p. 129.

[18] May 7, 1925, in Bertrand Russell, *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell: 1914–1944* (New York: Little, Brown, 1968), II, 174.

[19] F. M., "Letters of the Moment, I," *Criterion,* 3, No. 6 (Feb. 1924), 220–22. Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text as *LMI*.

[20] T. S. Eliot, *Collected Poems* (London: Faber, 1963), p. 64.

[21] *Ibid.,* p. 111.

[22] F. M., "Letters of the Moment, II," *Criterion,* 2, No. 7 (Apr. 1924), 360.

[23] T. S. Eliot, "A Commentary," *Criterion,* 2, No. 8 (July 1924), 374.

[24] Unpublished letter to the editor of *Bookman,* quoted in Roger Kojecky, *T. S. Eliot's Social Criticism* (New York: Farrar, 1972), p. 75.

[25] T. S. Eliot, "A Commentary: St. Joan," *Criterion,* 3, No. 9 (Oct. 1924), 4.

[26] *Times Literary Supplement,* 30 Oct. 1924, p. 690.

[27] Feiron Morris, "Thé Dansant," *Criterion,* 3, No. 9 (Oct. 1924), 72–78. Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text as *TD*.

[28] Feiron Morris, "Night Club," *Criterion,* 3, No. 11 (Apr. 1925), 401. Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text as *NC*.

[29] Fanny Marlow, "A Diary of the Rive Gauche," *Criterion,* 3, No. 10 (Jan. 1925), 290–97; and 3, No. 11 (Apr. 1925), 425–29, "to be continued." Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text as *DRG*.

[30] Fanny Marlow, "Fête Galante," *Criterion,* 3 No. 12 (July 1925), 557–63. Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text as *FG*.

[31] Matthews, *Great Tom,* p. 84.

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[32] Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years,* p. 122.
[33] F. M., "Necesse Est Perstare?," *Criterion,* 3, No. 11 (Apr. 1925), 364.
[34] Felix Morrison, "Mrs. Pilkington," *Criterion,* 3, No. 9 (Oct. 1924), 103–06.
[35] *Ibid.,* p. 106.
[36] Ackroyd, *T. S. Eliot,* p. 149.

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Family and Adultery: Images and Ideas in Updike's Rabbit Novels

Kerry Ahearn

John Updike has written that his "deepest pride" rests "in [the] ability to keep an organized mass of images moving forward."[1] This herding and balancing act depends to a great degree on his presenting human experience in terms of polarities, the most basic pair "revealed all the more sharply in the present lull that has settled over Western society, the great aboriginal distinction between the inner and outer, between *anima* and *res*. . . ."[2]

Even here, his polarized imagery complements the vision with the implied struggle between aboriginal and social, and with the suggestion that in apparently pacific times the struggle becomes all the more intense. This meshing of method and idea is very important for comprehending a writer who has defeated the High Culture bias against the novel of manners by restricting himself to the supposedly barren settings of America's middle-class cultural homogeneity.[3] In his long fiction, the conflict between aboriginal and social seems to demand a balance between the protagonist and a social milieu larger than family (the limitation of *The Centaur* and *Of the Farm*) but smaller than community (the expanse of *Couples* and *The Witches of Eastwick*) to create a drama of opposites in the individual versus social, and the attendant spiritual versus mundane which Updike generates from it. In the Rabbit novels, Updike has struck this balance, which is not to say it makes them better than all his others—whatever that might mean—but rather that they have provided the field in which Updike explores the "inner and outer . . . *anima* and *res*" most intensely. The crucial added element emerges precisely where marriage and community most spectacularly meet: adultery.

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The tense balance of this arrangement becomes clearer if one considers Updike's preoccupation with and explicit representation of sexual behavior. In his most resonant fiction, he employs sexuality as the most revealing form of social manners and spiritual quest—in fiction as in life, he seems to be saying, individuals can feign all manners but those. And though Updike has grown increasingly bold in the sex he describes, his purpose has never been sex-for-its-own-sake, though he could be fairly charged (as in the self-celebrating interpretations of classical music in *The Witches of Eastwick,* or the computer-jargon monologues of *Roger's Version*) with analogous abuses elsewhere. And if sexual manners cannot ultimately be feigned, then sexuality can be presented as a kind of ultimate "reality."

In the Rabbit novels it comes to us not in the free-agent fantasy tradition of the Hugh Hefners (such dreaming is invariably undercut), but instead in the complicated context of the family with adultery attached. There are risks, of course. Tony Tanner has pointed out, with reference to *Couples,* that frequent adulteries "lose contact with the sense of intense passion," and that "adultery . . . no longer signifies" such passion because society no longer maintains strong "institutional obstructions" against adulterers.[4] Again, the Rabbit novels escape this problem. First, frequent adulteries do not occur, Updike making sure that the individual victim's (aboriginal) sanctions against adultery excite the reader's own.[5] Second, "passion" as Tanner and Denis de Rougemont define it (a short-lived desire intensified by obstructions between the lovers[6]) has not been a significant force except when heavily laden with comedy and/or irony, as in *Rabbit Is Rich.* By emphasizing the details of fulfilled desires, Updike has tried to integrate sexual behavior into the organized mass of images from other sources, to polarize it in its inner world (*anima*) against the family (*res*), that visible evidence of a character's past efforts to create a reality both embodying and transcending passion.

Thus, the Rabbit novels show Updike herding masses of images gathered around the poles of family and adultery. The process accomplishes more than a display of virtuosity, however; it is central to his subversion of conventional moral associations. Good does not cling to one pole, and evil to the other. The central question in all his fiction, "What is a good life?" demands the question "Who am I?" and he demonstrates that family both undermines the sense of self and helps define it. The family is not merely a source of security and mutual affection, but also a prison. Likewise, adultery is a multifarious set of experiences ranging from boredom and disgust to beauty and

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tenderness (usually in the same scene, often in the same gesture). The family roles of father, mother, son, daughter, brother, and sister overlap and shift within each person, ever redefining family within the fiction and giving it simultaneously a sense of structure, pattern, and ambiguity. The result is human experience at once disjointed and seamless.

Updike's purpose is ultimately to subvert the authority of all sociological and psychological interpretations by showing the self-contradictory nature of outer forces and inner motives. Consequently, he forces us to contemplate the contexts and the processes of knowing. In his "idea" novels, such as *A Month of Sundays* and *Roger's Version*—Rabbit novels with contemplative protagonists—the dialectical process becomes stilted and intellectualized, sapped of narrative and dramatic energy. They lead Updike into a cold realm of what Frederick Crews termed "guilt management" and a "dry and slightly sadistic manner . . . blocked and self-defeating."[7] Because the Rabbit novels exist in the human realm of family rather than the intellectual realm of cold doctrine, they reveal the full complexity of Updike's views and image-making skills.

Nothing points to the advantages of the marriage-adultery pairing better than the genesis story of the Rabbit Angstrom situation, "Ace in the Hole" (1955), which lacks the adultery theme. The tension comes from a polarity of less—though still considerable—force: a male's often self-contradictory freedom fantasies, expressed in images of family. This story of Ace's return home from a job willfully lost reveals a telling pattern of roles played: the young male driver, a mixture of song and arrogance; the son posing independence before his coddling mother; the father carrying his little girl home; the husband confronted by his angry wife; and again the charming adolescent. Within this closed circle the story escapes stasis by moving on a clever dialogue among the stereotyped roles.

A glance at the opening and closing should suffice. First, the issue of fatherhood: the series is initiated when a young man in another car angers Ace by calling him "Dad"; it ends when Ace—with no answer for his wife's anger—flips on the radio and dances her into a fantasy where the poses of irresponsibility and fatherhood merge as he whispers, "Baby, we got to have a boy."[8] Moreover, this dream warps the image of children into Ace's high-school reminiscence wherein "all the other kids were around them, in a ring, clapping time." The metamorphosis reveals to us as it obscures for him the true enemy, time. In his simple desire "to be great again" (*SD*, p. 26) lie both the necessity and the

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denial of family. A second important element in the dialogue pattern is singing. To remember that "song" is related etymologically (via Latin "carmen") to "charm" is to comprehend that Ace's power has the nonrational and amoral appeal of music, which allows him to forget time, as in the first scene, and to persuade others to do so, as in the final one. An overlooked dimension of the story's punning title is the "hole" formed by the ring of admirers, who as they celebrate the dance also mimic the clock, marking "time."

As clever as this dialogue proves to be, and as brilliantly as it illuminates the situation, it depends so heavily on the "balance" of opposites and tight circular structure that linear movement is impossible. Of course, that is one of the story's insights: Ace can sustain the illusion only while the radio plays his song. Yet if the story does not take Updike to the untenable positions he constantly risks in the novels, it reveals a good deal about his instincts for finding appropriate narrative forms, his penchant for regarding marriage and family as self-contradictory situations, and his intention to communicate not by abstraction but by image-friction that brings to mind a Lionel Trilling definition: "whenever we put two emotions into juxtaposition we have what we can properly call an idea."[9]

The Rabbit novels also depend on the combination of balanced, dialectical image-pairs and circular plot structures. Circular movements are plain to see: flight is the first and last fact of *Rabbit, Run,* marriage the condition at the beginning and end of *Rabbit Redux,* and Rabbit himself the complacent king-of-the-castle before and after the challenges of *Rabbit Is Rich.* Updike has carefully tended a dialectic of images and "all the little congruences and arabesques"[10] within and among the books as Rabbit turns alternately toward the matrix of family, responsibility, agape, and sacrifice, and then to the seemingly opposite values of independence, freedom, eros, and selfishness. But Updike has also added several crucial elements to complicate the dialectic and open the circles: the effects of time (and Rabbit's awareness of it), a much larger cast of characters (some of whom make liberal use of the vocabulary of moral values), and the theme of adultery. The first two may be taken almost as inevitable with the novel form as Updike uses it, but the last is a different sort of discovery for him—adultery's challenge to marriage as a narrative theme allows him to extend his fiction without sacrificing intensity or unity.

The opening "flight" section of *Rabbit, Run*—rich with Rabbit's sense of nostalgia (the knowledge of time), with the shadow of moral debate, and with adultery as its destination—provides brief but clear

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evidence of Updike's strategies. First, it presents and rejects the great American archetype of the hero's fleeing women and society to find freedom in nurturing American nature. It teases us with an exploration of Rabbit as mystic-Romantic: music on the car radio charms him into a kind of trance, whose atavisms make Baltimore-Washington "a two-headed dog guard[ing] the coastal route,"[11] and mix instinct with a kind of religious superstition. Rabbit makes crucial decisions on the strength of coincidences (the number 26) and negative "logic" ("There is this quality, in things, of the right way seeming wrong at first. To test our faith" [*RR*, p. 37]). Yet Updike does not mock the atavistic or dismiss the Romantic. Rather, he sets up a dialogue: when the West Virginia gas station attendant, "wearing glasses, a scholar"—a formalist scholastic in this context—learns Rabbit has no map, he attacks the validity of intuition when he advises, "The only way to get somewhere, you know, is to figure out where you're going before you get there" (*RR*, p. 32).

In this masterful sequence of twenty pages, Updike both presents the clearly dialectical categories and scrambles their values. An Emersonian notion of truth-versus-repose becomes in Rabbit's mind not a journey "between narrow walls . . . insanity on one side, & fat dulness on the other,"[12] but one to truth and repose: a Polynesian beach somewhere between Florida and Louisiana. The arch-Romantic virtues of instinct and spontaneity prompt him to flee south but cannot help him make the simplest practical choice. The narrative lives in Rabbit's superior energy, but explodes the clichés of flight-from-society at the moment Rabbit emerges from a net of tree limbs in a nightmarish lovers' lane and, blinded first from ahead and then from behind by light of religious imagery but dynamo origin, "turns instinctively . . . north" (*RR*, p. 40). toward his hometown, Mt. Judge.

So Rabbit's turn eliminates radical solitary freedom as a continuously present polarity in the novel; in fact, the next instance of pure flight brings the novel to a sudden end. Furthermore, this first flight-and-return establishes the matter for all the novels by rejecting the outer-epic mode of movement and adventure in favor of an inner-epic whose settings are domestic: variations of marriage. Being single terrifies Rabbit, who looks first for a "family" role by seeking his father-substitute, Coach Tothero, and is briefly looked after by this "proud mother" (*RR*, p. 51), who then finds him a wife-substitute in Ruth. For Rabbit, the fantasy replacement for marriage is an adultery which the first love scene with Ruth makes coincident with marriage itself: "He makes love to her as he would to his wife" (*RR*, p. 81).

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Updike carefully nurtures ambiguity by emphasizing the aesthetics of adultery as much as characters' discussions of its immorality. The technique commences in the dialectical description of that first sexual encounter, which neatly balances images of ecstasy and depression, tenderness and anger, red and blue, mint and sour, pollen and sweat (*RR*, pp. 81–83). Rabbit is at once serious about the implications of sex and frivolously offended by Ruth's diaphragm. He wills this liaison to become a family because like Ace he loves the idea of children. The entire scene pits spontaneity against design, and tenderness against coercion; none dominates its opposite. Any attempt to judge Rabbit runs into the Kierkegaardian notion that "every truth is nevertheless truth only to a certain degree; when it goes beyond, the counterpoint appears, and it becomes untruth."[13]

Yet by portraying Rabbit's equivocations, Updike clearly invites just the moral categorizing he seeks to prove inappropriate. This subversion depends on one of Updike's major themes, that "perversity is the soul's very life."[14] Rabbit is a family man who breaks one family to begin another, breaks that to reunite the first, and breaks that to run; he gravitates toward increasingly complex social and moral situations not despite but because of his childlike interest in simplicity. And this novel exceeds all of Updike's others until *Rabbit Redux* in its experimenting with family roles in the context of spiritual quest. The major conflict—Rabbit the father seeking in a Christian context his place as son—commences with a boy's basketball game, moves to "father" Mouseketeer Jimmy's announcing, "Know thyself. . . . Don't try to be [the kid] next door" (*RR*, p. 14), and emerges as action when Rabbit sees his own Mom feeding his young son Nelson. The completeness of that family scene liberates him for the attempted flight south. Near the end of the novel, Rabbit feels his uncertainty most intensely as family metaphor, his failure to make what others in the novel claim to be the simple transition from son to father: "Ruth and Janice both have parents: with this he dissolves both of them. Nelson remains: here is a hardness he must carry with him" (*RR*, p. 254). Brotherly Eccles reminds Rabbit at one point of Christ's notion "that saints shouldn't marry" (*RR*, p. 120), and the patriarch Kruppenbach claims that Rabbit simply lacks the strength to be a father.[15] Both men make conventional judgments, and reject the ideal of questing. Yet both are questionable fathers, and as pilgrims they are content to wait.

Family provides still another significant theme by the complications it presents to the Rabbit who seeks certain selfhood. To be a male member of a family is to be, simultaneously—as Updike emphasized

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about the period of Melville's precipitous decline—"father, son, brother, and husband," and to know "the fierce strains of the household."[16] Rabbit finds that to "fail" as a father also means to fail as a son (his father calls him "enemy"), husband, and brother. The simultaneity of the roles unnerves the seeker of simplicity in him, though he assumes the roles separately, playing son to Mrs. Smith and brother to Eccles; making Ruth a "wife" (*RR*, pp. 75, 81), Nelson/Rabbit "himself sitting in a high chair" (*RR*, p. 25), and Eccles' congregation a "family" that releases him from fear (*RR*, p. 217). Independent of Rabbit's own perceptions, the narrative provides other examples: Rabbit as baby Rebecca (*RR*, p. 189), Mrs. Springer as the same infant (*RR*, p. 231), and Miriam as an Arab boy standing next to Mr. Angstrom "the limp-faced old woman of a printer" (*RR*, p. 156). When Rabbit sees the brotherly Eccles diminished by the complexities of the minister's female-dominated household, he seems to sense that all members of families suffer when judged against the notion he has of the quester, who must prey on those closest by. In the end he cannot be other than alone, but without the constant presence of family, the novel would generate no tension and no ideas. His fathering three children by two "wives" makes judgment seem necessary, but the charges ambiguous. Adultery and those children give the "idea" of the novel its force, and allow Rabbit to embody Mr. Death and the gift of life, the anti-father and the father.

Rabbit Redux clearly shows Updike's awareness of the energy in patterns of disintegrating and substitute families. There are three children in this novel as well; as in *Rabbit, Run* the boy remains, the girl dies, and the third, never really his, fades from view among hints of death. Like *Rabbit, Run,* its successor derives much of its imagery and narrative impulse from violations and perversions of family relationships as individuals struggle against their circumstances, specifically their family roles. At its most elemental, this consists of the same sort of role-shifting found in the earlier novel: Rabbit's sister Mim as his wife; Charlie Stavros as his brother; Jill Pendleton as his daughter, as her own mother, as Skeeter's sister, Nelson's sister, and Nelson's wife; Nelson as Rabbit, as Rabbit's brother; Mr. Angstrom as Nelson; Stavros as Nelson's uncle. Moreover, "divorced women turn their sons into little husbands," and "Mothers and fathers, they turn up everywhere."[17] But more important than the novels' similarities are the variations Updike creates on that basic theme. First, adultery frames the narrative for both Rabbit and Janice. She begins by consenting to an affair with Charlie Stavros and ends by rejecting it, while Rabbit at first refuses the advances of

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Peggy Fosnacht (the victim of her husband's adultery), but flees to her in the end to break himself free, for Janice. Second, *Rabbit Redux* takes great risks by creating a new "Angstrom" family wherein all the characters knowingly contribute to the emotional conflict which draws upon a broader social and cultural base than Updike had previously attempted to use.

The Angstroms on the eve of Apollo 12 seem the conventional, sustaining, and stable nuclear family. Like the nation around them, they appear upwardly mobile, but the heart decays. Rabbit has spent the Sixties becoming a modern-day Bartleby; with no apparent tension between *anima* and *res,* he sits at his linotype machine, spiritually dead. His condition helps explain Janice's decision to break the family, and is somehow related to his guilt. But her adultery—like Rabbit's with Ruth, even to its setting in an upstairs apartment across town—is ancillary, serving to take her away so that Updike can focus once again on Rabbit and his response to a "vacuum" in which, like the space exploration in these same months, connection is inevitable.

The substitute family Rabbit soon finds gathered at his home consists entirely of persons floating free because of familial and social breakups. Though this novel illustrates fragmentation on every level—the Fosnachts, the neighborhood, the "desolate openness" of town (*RRe,* p. 3), and (belied by the momentary unity of watching space probes) the nation itself—it proves that family is Rabbit's inevitable condition. When free, he brings Jill and Skeeter to him because he needs people as much for their chaos as for their company, and he foreshadows this when he rails at Charlie Stavros about "the Negroes plus rich kids" (*RRe,* p. 47) who anger him most of all. Another part of the truth is that Rabbit has long fantasized about having "a barefoot Du Pont."[18] Again family and adultery combine because Rabbit wills them to: he agrees to take Jill home by saying, "O.K., kid" (*RRe,* p. 133); immediately after offering to sleep with him, Jill remarks, "You have this funny family side. Always worrying about who needs you" (*RRe,* p. 141). The black youth Skeeter interprets the need as weakness, and moves in to become a brother, among other connections, to Jill and Rabbit and Nelson. The contradictions in these relationships make for a volatile family, but the fact that hypocritical characters such as Janice and Brumbach make the conventional "moral" condemnations reminds us that the family group is neither "good" nor "bad," and that any family's stasis contains the explanation of its destruction.

Janice's departure breaks a static circle and allows Rabbit to act out one of the great "freedom" myths of the Sixties (and of American

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idealism): communal living.[19] In an extended family metaphor, this mode of sharing makes Rabbit the paradoxical "father" in a situation in which parental authority seems irrelevant. He wants brotherhood more than authority, but a temporary brotherhood of freedom-without-responsibility. From this comes a tension between the communal ideal and the conventional family that keeps the novel alive, for it constantly subverts tradition, especially racial and sexual conventions, within clearly defined family metaphors. Jill, young enough to be Rabbit's daughter, bonds with Nelson as a substitute for the long-dead Rebecca (whose tragedy is mentioned as Jill first enters the house [*RRe,* p. 141]), but she also becomes Rabbit's and perhaps Nelson's incestuous lover (touching her for the first time, Rabbit thinks, "CLINIC FOR RUNAWAYS OPENED. *Fathers Do Duty On Nights Off*" (*RRe,* p. 144).

In a similar way, Skeeter's moving in to become a parody-son makes Rabbit "brothers in paternity" (*RRe,* p. 195) with the blacks at work. So family roles vie as metaphors of the self even as fragmentation is the fact of the characters' lives. The patterns of images Updike presents conform to the Trillingesque notion of fiction-as-idea, especially apparent in the attempts to make analogies between the family and society at large. On the most obvious level, Skeeter's seminars in black history name the parallel between the house and the nation, and his taking on the voice of conscience makes him, ironically, the minister figure so common in the civil rights movement (and foreshadows his final role in life). Rabbit pays him heed, it seems, both from voyeurism and intellectual curiosity, motivated by a desire to deny Charlie Stavros' accusation—in a richly prophetic scene—that he is an "imperialist racist" (*RRe,* p. 49).

But Updike creates most tensions and explores the ambiguity in the family roles most subtly through what many readers consider the least subtle of themes: the sexual. True, the "public" themes of racism, the sexual revolution (which Rabbit fears he has missed), the Vietnam War, and the general drift to self-absorption are always present as the politically hawkish Rabbit struggles to become a commune brother, but the social is of secondary interest, providing resonance but not primary energy. The narrative emphasizes the individual; Skeeter's attempts to link his anger to the radical elements of the civil rights movement and the outrage of American slavery's history are never presented as totally genuine, even by Skeeter, who becomes a slaveholder before the reader's eyes. Like all purveyors of ideas in Updike's fiction, Skeeter is something of the charlatan. For Rabbit, who thinks by feeling, the novel also seeks to show that concept gains impetus through emotion rather

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than the other way around. Though he is largely unaware of the significance of his actions, Rabbit's playing father, brother, and incestuous lover to Jill balances detachment and intimacy, protection and predation.

In the vacuum created by Janice's absence, the lovers make slow orbits. Updike's creative temperament seems to require this stasis, which allows him to expose every contour of the experience in the same way that a young man in one of his *New Yorker* stories sits on a bed examining his naked girlfriend as she slowly revolves before him. Rabbit too becomes more and more the spectator, and equivocates so long that by the time Jill feels—or thinks she feels—his genuine emotion, she whispers, "It's too late for you to love me" (*RRe,* p. 263). Rabbit can think to love her as a woman after Skeeter has used heroin to become her master; he can think to love her as a daughter when she, like Rebecca, is dead to him. The imagery of betrayal here is specifically of the Sixties: he imagines a metaphor making his semen on her body an "acid-burn . . . [she looks] like a napalmed child" (*RRe,* p. 142). The theme surfaces again when the fire (ignited perhaps by an emotionally shaky Vietnam veteran) destroys his house and kills Jill in his bedroom. His active complicity is also implied when he cleans the windows of his home (a voyeur had peered through the night before) and returns to Peggy Fosnacht's for an adulterous tumble whose "inflammation" (*RRe,* p. 273) coincides with the arson's work.

However, another set of associations counters those which seem to condemn him for ignorance and indecision: two images, the saliva he in a welter of emotions wipes from Jill's mouth when she is lost on heroin (*RRe,* p. 261) and the spit Skeeter drops into Rabbit's outstretched palm (*RRe,* p. 292) reconnect with his early prediction to Stavros that "the Negroes and the rich kids" are beyond his reach, that social unrest is personified by "some black face spitting" (*RRe,* p. 49). From this view, he is the disoriented victim. Jill is his heroin, Skeeter his connection; when Rabbit tells her, "You're under my skin" (*RRe,* p. 268), he shares her addict's wish. Their attraction to Skeeter's rejections also hints at shared guilt and self-destructiveness. Because "the heart prefers to move against the grain of circumstances,"[20] Rabbit accepts into his personal vacuum the very guests he cannot accommodate, and when the predictable going-wrong occurs, he rescues himself from this family by turning to Peggy and yet another adultery. The question of blame in Jill's death is no more answerable than the graveside question in *Rabbit, Run* about who killed Rebecca, but in the second novel the social referent is much richer. Like the Soyuz docking maneuver in its

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epigraph, *Rabbit Redux* combines elements from the cosmic to low comedy.

By destroying role boundaries, Updike frees his main characters from simple interpretation. Most important is that their three-ring sexual circus denies passion (as de Rougemont defines it: "idealized eroticism"[21]). It is the absence of obstacles between Rabbit and the attainment of his desire that explains his lack of emotion compared with the responses of Nelson and Janice, who claims that she is in bliss but whose actions constantly belie the assertion. De Rougemont's linking of eros and death points to the reason Jill affects Rabbit as she does: she is always, in one sense, dead to him (she first appears before him wearing a dress "dirty as smoke" [*RRe,* p. 125], and her upper-class roots make her, he admits, forever remote from him). The closest he can come to her is to take the place of her dead father, for as he explains to Nelson, "She's too old to adopt. And you're too young to marry" (*RRe,* p. 256). Examining the needle marks on her arm, he thinks, "They might be bee stings. There are not too many. He can talk to Janice. Then he remembers that Janice is not here, and that only Nelson is their child" (*RRe,* p. 264).

Jill's death, however, does not exhaust Updike's manipulations of family and adultery. The reconciliation with Janice comes in a section named after Rabbit's sister Mim, who represents yet another thematic variation. Mim, the isolated self, represents the figure Rabbit has proved he cannot be, and though her talks with Rabbit are fresh, even comic, Updike makes her a kind of horror, too: she has no family, nor will she ever have one. But her significance in the family appears early in the novel, during one of Rabbit's rare visits with his mother, when he suddenly looks around and thinks, "It is like it used to be, except that Mom is in a bathrobe and Mim has become Nelson" (*RRe,* p. 91). The transposition of generation and gender is outrageous enough to give one pause. Updike suggests that Rabbit longs for the mother's-son role he left at home, and for *philos,* a love with Nelson free of the passions of lust and anger, for in his memory he and Mim "never fought" (*RRe,* p. 319). She enters the final section of the narrative to destroy Rabbit's most nostalgic family myth, that all disunities come from the outside (he has constructed the substitute family as if to confirm this myth), and that he can reach blissful accord with his sister because she defines true family: "She is himself, with the combination jiggled" (*RRe,* p. 314), which is to say the ideal family is an image of the self. Rabbit is proved incorrect on both counts. Mim's numbness to the "idealized eroticism" preoccupying Rabbit (even in his fantasies about her) allows her to

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couple with Stavros, destroy Janice's sexual fairy tale, and make possible the reconciliation Rabbit and Janice half desire.

The ominous vacuum at the end of *Rabbit Redux* can be attributed partly to Mim's influence, but remains as Updike seeks to balance the Rabbit-Janice reunion—staged as an adulterous tryst—with its uncertain possibilities, and thus to avoid "cathartic satisfactions" that might ruin the ending.[22] Rabbit and Janice reunited in bed are described as a combination of intimacy and displacement, as if to acknowledge the necessity of family security but not by family images so much as by what Updike has elsewhere called "the two existential mysteries—the existence of the universe, the existence of 'I,' which . . . have not been dissolved."[23] The novel ends without the "docking" maneuver of its epigraph, but nevertheless with a rush of orbital imagery, their "space" a "burrow," her breasts "radiant debris," her buttocks "orbs" that "float away," her side "soft as flight," his penis "microcosmic" (*RRe,* pp. 406–07), small and all. The grammar of the novel's last line emphasizes singularity: "He. She. Sleeps." Yet the final effect is to pose the risks of union against the terror-filled solitude of internal and external space.

Rabbit Is Rich continues that theme, but broadens its focus on family to include new roles and more complicated configurations. Significantly, this is not a broken-marriage novel, so its adulteries take on an incestuous quality that paradoxically emphasizes family. The mixed daughter-sister-wife images characterizing Jill now dominate the portraits of no fewer than five women, extending the range of family as a defining metaphor.

By emphasizing a series of family studies—three generations caught together in the Springer house; isolated pairs and trios within that group; the Angstrom dead; and intruders from past "families" such as Skeeter and Jill and Ruth and perhaps Ruth's daughter—Updike uses family as a way of demonstrating Rabbit's mental structures for apprehending the world. Rabbit, for example, admits that Janice is quite literally his treasure, that he recalls his parents' poverty most vividly in their "scorning the few kin that tried to keep in touch," that "the misery of life . . . has carried him away from the faces on the porch," and that "there's nothing to understand you like your own blood."[24]

These and a host of other examples show a Rabbit Angstrom who has achieved perspective on his life largely by means of family metaphors. Virtually every important character appears in a family context (even Skeeter was at his death the head of a "Messiah Now Freedom Family," and Rabbit late in the novel refers to Ruth as a

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"sister" to Janice). The major exceptions—Charlie Stavros, the Reverend Archie Campbell, and Rabbit's sister Mim—are characterized with varying degrees of sympathy by their lack of family: Stavros a willing captive of his failing mother, Campbell of his church, Mim of the Mob. Without this constant reference to varieties of familial relationships, *Rabbit Is Rich* has no coherence.

Thus, one basic structural feature is the oedipal struggle of Rabbit's attempts to send Nelson away so that he can rest unchallenged beneath the roof of Springer Motors, and Nelson's counter-fantasy of Rabbit and Ma Springer dead: "Then he and Mom. He knows he can manage Mom" (*RIR*, p. 323). This theme of regression shows itself again in Rabbit's fantasy that the young woman who appears one day at the Toyota lot is the child of his affair with Ruth, a suspicion Updike explores both as a unifier and a destroyer of marriage and family because the fantasy embodies impulses toward both fidelity and infidelity.

However, this regressive impulse is balanced by Rabbit's clumsy but sincere attempts to be communicator and father, and by the presence, seldom willed or comprehended by Rabbit, of the mature and wifely and maternal woman (played variously by Janice, Ruth, and Thelma Harrison) in his life, and at the end by Rabbit's welcoming Nelson's daughter.[25] Despite its human conflicts, *Rabbit Is Rich* presents a picture of family unity. In avoiding the broken-marriage score, Updike signals that this narrative will exemplify the polarities of family and adultery in new ways. Even a quick review demonstrates that it relies less than the previous novels upon scenes involving just two characters, two generations, two points of view.[26] The complications exist not only within scenes, but also among them in a maze of cross-references that unify the American mean Updike portrays.

In *Rabbit Is Rich* Updike continues the technique of combining the spiritual and the mundane to create an imagery of constant friction. In the early, seemingly plotless sections, when the underlying message is the role money plays in insulating Rabbit from struggle, economics fashions both spiritual and physical images. Family, as an attempt to reconcile economics and love, provides a host of examples, many of them comic, as when Rabbit decorates Janice's naked body with gold coins, and later, when Janice carries a box of silver dollars "like a baby" in her arms. For the most part, the examples do not involve comedy. Because the security of the Springer wealth has allowed him to layer thirty pounds of fat over his questing self, Rabbit remains insensitive to his destructive and basically oedipal conflict within that extended

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family. At his father-in-law's funeral, he achieves a situation very much like the one Nelson longs for:

> From the way Janice and her mother carried on you would have thought a mixture of Prince Valiant and Moses had bit the dust. . . . He looked down, noticed that Fred's hair had been parted wrong, and felt nothing. The great thing about the dead, they make space. (*RIR*, p. 5)

Updike also uses monetary images for connections with adultery when he sends Rabbit and Janice into Fiscal Alternatives to sell the Krugerrands to a platinum-haired salesgirl; Janice asks Rabbit to compare the metals ("How much did you want . . . that bitch by the way?"), and he chooses the gold ("Hardly at all. . . . It's terrifying, in fact, how little" [*RIR*, p. 376]). *Consumer Reports* has become Rabbit's Bible, and the "nickel rich" country club his paradise. He thinks of himself as a free man because of his place in a family he has all but ceased to function in as a father. His conception of safety is couched in specifically materialist terms: "a margin of resources, and the stifled terror that always made him restless had dulled down. . . . Freedom, that he always thought was outward motion, turns out to be this inner dwindling" (*RIR*, p. 97). The dwindling of self is shown by his grotesque fear of Nelson as a male and economic rival. "Running out of gas," Rabbit's first assessment of the society around him, is another materialist expression referring not only to the nation, but also to his physical, spiritual, and familial self. Here, as in the other two novels, Rabbit's movements will chart a quest carrying spiritual reference, but they will not take him outside family as that concept is defined within the novel.

Because both Rabbit and Janice had the dubious privilege of bolting free to create the adultery-dominated plot movements of the previous novels, and because marriage itself has now become synonymous with the money and repose Rabbit values above all, Updike here modifies the earlier formula by creating adulterous temptations that are characterized as extensions of the family. Thus, there is frequently in the novel an incestuous quality about sexual longing. The personal anger of *Rabbit, Run* and the class and racial anger of *Rabbit Redux* do not appear in the adulterous impulses of *Rabbit Is Rich*. The three main situations of the novel—the reentry of Nelson and his women into the Springer household; the mystery of Ruth's daughter Annabelle; and the influence of the patriarchal Webb Murkett—extend the concept of family, and within that context create ambiguity rather than naming neatly opposed pairs which the broken household

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accommodated in the earlier novels (Janice-versus-Ruth, Rabbit-versus-Charlie, etc.), and which were the dominant means of debate there. In *Rabbit Is Rich,* the relationships are not immediately clear, nor are the conflicts.

The merged themes of family and adultery appear when Rabbit's own sleep is ended by the return of fatherhood, first in the presence of the mysterious Annabelle, and then of Nelson, Melanie, and finally Pru. In each case, there is a longing for a daughter that contains both paternal and sexual impulses. When Janice calls Rabbit "unnatural father" for his graceless response to Nelson, she names one of the novel's major themes, though not its final judgment: like the other novels, this one contains no such judgment, just a thorough elucidation of the existential problems. The combination of paternal and erotic can be thought of as "unnatural," but its appearance in other Updike stories ("Eros Rampant," for example) suggests that it names a motive as natural as the human desire for complications, or the heart's choosing to move against the grain of circumstance. The narrative sequence which brings the theme to light is instructive: a memory of the patriarchal Kruppenbach moves Rabbit to "confess to Janice" his suspicion about Annabelle (*RIR,* p. 71); immediately thereafter, Nelson's arrival reminds Rabbit of Jill (*RIR,* p. 73) and brings Melanie (likened to his "own daughter" [*RIR,* p. 220]) into the family, and later the pregnant Pru "[Rabbit] wants to be giving her this baby" [*RIR,* p. 184]).

The pairing of sexual and filial, which also involves Cindy Murkett (young enough to be her husband's daughter), creates much of the tension that substitutes for plotting in the novel: Will Rabbit prove Annabelle to be his daughter? Will Nelson, who meets her the evening Pru falls down the stairs, sleep with her? Will Rabbit and Nelson share Melanie? Will Rabbit seduce Cindy? That some of these questions are misleads, and some remain unanswered, is less important than their function: the young women awaken Rabbit—lust serves other thematic purposes, including the spiritual—because the drowning of Rebecca left in him a terror (of death and incompletion) and a longing (for life and continuity). Rabbit's response to all the young women must be seen in the context of that death and his natural desire to deny it or somehow recoup the loss. That the existence of Annabelle should appeal to this deep need in Rabbit, and that pursuing her should lead him to humiliations such as fleeing in dandy's clothes from her dog across a muddy orchard, is the mixture of sublime and ridiculous Updike constantly seeks. That Pru should later consider naming her child

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Rebecca demonstrates Updike's willingness to risk the implausible in order to remind the reader of this crucial connection between past and present, repugnance and pathos. Without it, Rabbit might well be simply unnatural.

Because that connection is not apparent to those he lives with, however, Rabbit frequently seems to Nelson (because of Rebecca and Jill) and Janice (because of Annabelle) utterly perverse. This undermines his position in the Springer house, especially in the debate concerning Nelson's immediate future, and Rabbit's resulting frustration prepares for the emergence of a most subtle and devilish character in the family-adultery play, the appropriately named Webb Murkett. To Rabbit, Webb embodies self-containment and unquestioned power in marriage and family. Webb is in one sense the destination of the novel: the portion he dominates weaves together important strands of images Updike creates by family interaction earlier in the narrative. Webb's patriarchal status allows the metaphor of family to be extended over the three couples featured in two especially revealing narrative sections: the party in Webb's home and the trip he leads to the ocean paradise Rabbit has equated with sensual bliss since his web-filled trip at the beginning of *Rabbit, Run.*[27]

That Rabbit functions in these novels essentially as a naïf—like Huck Finn, he cannot comprehend life's lessons without destroying his subordination to his creator—is clearest in his relationship with Webb. One would not expect Rabbit to perceive the danger implied in Webb's name, or the contradiction in his "calming gravel voice" (*RIR,* p. 57), or the menace in the "red hairs [that] arc out of his eyebrows glinting" (*RIR,* p. 171), for these are Updike's images, which, along with others ranging from Polaroid pictures to the stars above, suggest Webb's demonic function. Rabbit does sense a strangeness in the Murketts' "garrison colonial" house, but again, the images are not his: the bar is a "kind of altar" to depressants; "spineless arrangements" come from the built-in speakers; the downstairs-bathroom mirror gives Rabbit's face a deathly "pallor . . . his lips are bluish" (*RIR,* pp. 283–84).

There are lamps of Webb's making, "rotten wood . . . solid as marble," and photographs representing Webb's two previous marriages, framed so that the "phantom women . . . vanished mistresses of all this fleeting family happiness" are "beheaded or sliced to a splinter" (*RIR,* pp. 282–83). Rabbit feels a kind of disgust at the SX-70 photographs he finds in the Murketts' bedroom, but cannot connect it to Cindy's confessing, "Webb's so gentle, he never pushes me" (*RIR,* p. 293). That the first two shots from this roll of film should be of the

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children playing comments ambiguously on the multiplicity of family life, an ambiguity lost on Rabbit, as are the ironies of the "play-muddied little bikini" and "Webb's shadow . . . with horns" (*RIR*, p. 309), images later echoed by references to cuckolding and demonism.[28] Rather than making him wary, the photographs and the Murkett home reinforce for Rabbit a sense of Webb's mystique, and ironically inspire him to plan Cindy's seduction. His naïveté has its comic side, but the comedy gives way before the ultimate theme of this situation: authority. Rabbit chooses Webb as his guide because Webb has put gold in his and Janice's life, has given them the stars (*RIR*, p. 219), and becomes in Rabbit's imagination something of a deity, a combination of sexual prowess, magic, and mammon.

Thinking again of the bedroom photographs, Rabbit remembers "the way their bodies looked golden at the end, like gods" (*RIR*, p. 311). Updike double-stamps the image soon after in the discussion of how well Nelson was reared:

> "We did what we could," Janice says, firm again, sounding like her mother. "We're not gods."
>
> "Nobody is," Rabbit says, scaring himself. (*RIR*, p. 312)

This fear of an empty universe—the recognition that "every time in his life he's made a move toward [the invisible], somebody has gotten killed" (*RIR*, p. 162)—and the ironic expression of his lust for Cindy (sex with her would be "like looking into the sun" [*RIR*, p. 189]) show in Rabbit a need for Webb that makes the Caribbean trip the drawing together of family-and-adultery images and their connection with the theological-astronomical. Webb becomes uncontested patriarch, and Rabbit narrowly misses a Faustian plunge.

From the beginning, Webb is the center, his power exclusive. The 747 flying them to the tropics is like his living room (*RIR*, p. 393), and the island itself is his domain: his sailboat flies, and all his putts drop in. At the resort, he stands like a father over Janice, who sits at his feet, her hair in a girlish "stubby ponytail" (*RIR*, p. 397). Imagery suggests for him an ironic deification: he orients them to the heavens, pointing out the Southern Cross; his wrinkled neck reminds us of the raisin image to which God had shrunk in Rabbit's mind (*RIR*, p. 390). But in this new scene the traditional reckonings are lost, first in the sky, then on earth: "the Big Dipper stands on its handle here in a way never seen in southeastern Pennsylvania"; the Southern Cross has no navigational significance.[29] Here, stars "hang with a certain menace, fragments of a frozen explosion" (*RIR*, p. 395), the godless big bang.

Reflecting Updike's penchant for creating highly symbolic textures

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by his highly particular descriptions, Webb becomes the sky itself when he makes the novel's ultimate power play: announcing the mate-swap. He delivers his "sermon" wearing "a kind of dark blue captain's jacket with spoked brass buttons" (*RIR,* p. 407), a night-sky image Rabbit intensifies when he dreams of the moment when "he sinks himself in Cindy as if a star were to fall . . ." (*RIR,* p. 407). This image in turn echoes Rabbit's earlier assessment that without religious belief, "you'll sink" (*RIR,* p. 198). That Cindy's full name, Lucinda, hints at Lucifer explains her black bikini, and 747s heading out of Philadelphia "due east into the sun" (*RIR,* p. 388).[30] Just as Webb announces bedtime, Rabbit sees a star fall "brief as a scratched [lucifer] match" (*RIR,* p. 409).

What would Updike have us infer from this merging of the religious, aesthetic, adulterous, and marital? Nothing so simple as a moral prescription, but Janice's remark on the eastbound airliner—"You think whatever happens . . . the Devil won't touch you" (*RIR,* p. 392)—provides a clue. Like Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown," this story portrays a husband and wife who go to meet the Devil. The "sinning" is sad, but inevitable, and is seen in family terms, for Janice is drawn to the fatherly in Webb just as Rabbit wants the daughterly Cindy. As in the Eden myth, the woman encounters evil first, and is changed by it: the morning after, Janice wears a "purple" suit, matching Webb's "grape colored shirt" (*RIR,* p. 422), both echoing an earlier description of Webb's penis as a "purply stalk" (*RIR,* p. 307). Janice appears stained, but as she will later prove, aware of "evil" (*RIR,* p. 455). Rabbit, on the other hand, retains his naïveté because he is saved from his desired night—a "fall and sizzle" (*RIR,* p. 409)—with Cindy, whose status as forbidden fruit seems confirmed by references to her face as a "candy apple" (*RIR,* p. 307) and her cheek as "apple-firm" (*RIR,* p. 426). Significantly, he is saved by his family: Janice forces him to leave the island because Nelson has fled fatherhood and her mother cannot cope with the situation.

But like Hawthorne, Updike employs form without serving orthodoxy. The novel uses family to intensify the shock of its situations, but not to prove family a fixed good. Janice might, after all, be motivated by jealousy in hastening their departure—thoughts of Webb make her cry. Though Rabbit does not get Cindy, his night with Thelma ambiguously melds great tenderness and a long series of uric and scatological images, and is presented as both adulterous and marital (*RIR,* p. 422). Yet Thelma, who alters the earlier celestial associations by calling Rabbit "radiant," and who defends her husband by saying, "He was never a star like you [Harry]," influences him in several significant

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ways. He seems on one hand genuinely moved by her love for him, and on the other stilled by his many intuitions of darkness, emptiness, and death during their sexual play.[31] He also seems to accept her idea that his desire for Cindy is somehow a family perversion (*RIR*, p. 420). As the plane lands in Philadelphia, Rabbit admits "he has risen as high as he can" and will not have the women he dreams of; in this moment of fear, unknowingly holding Janice's hand, he thinks, "*Forgive me. Please, God*" (*RIR*, p. 428). Later, in his new home he takes a last look at a decade's skin magazines (the decade since Jill's death), and throws them in the garbage.

These movements within him hint at a process of change, but one having little to do with intellectual perceptions or conscious moral awareness. Each of the Rabbit novels concerns a difficult passage in adult life, and *Rabbit Is Rich,* like *Rabbit Redux,* ends with a regathering of family (Nelson's exit reminding us that the destructive impulse comes first in the process). Rabbit's change comes to us in terms of family relationships. In the badly remodeled Penn Park gardener's cottage, as in *Redux*'s Safe Haven Motel ten years before, gestures of love and unity prevail, but precariously. The "lozenge-panes" and park grounds "such as you see in books of fairy tales" prompt Rabbit to recognize Janice as the "keystone of his wealth," but the mossy lawn "webbed by the shadows" hints that he is not completely safe.

His materialist fantasies come from an imagination essentially fatalistic, and leading (as Updike remarked in another fairy-tale context) "not into the realms of love satisfied or of virtue rewarded but to the land of El Dorado, that paradise to whose inert and frozen malevolence the penniless are blind."[32] However, the structure of the novel does not imply fatalism: it reestablishes family, lasts exactly the length of Pru's pregnancy, and ends with the arrival of a baby almost named Rebecca. Rabbit demonstrates by his last gesture that he has subconsciously accepted the process of time, he welcomes into his life "another nail in his coffin . . . what he has been waiting for . . . Fortune's hostage, heart's desire, a granddaughter" (*RIR*, p. 476). This act does not erase his grotesque fears of Nelson as enemy, but does slide the characterization toward a balance.

The sacred and romanticized image of the nuclear family provides Updike with a myth in which to root his fiction most successfully connecting the individual, familial, and social. In his created world, men must struggle mightily and live intensely, but are not prompted to do so by the secure family. In adultery they strive, but cannot live. Rabbit is his best exemplar of the ordinary man questing, and (Mim, Thelma, Jill,

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and even Ruth see it) he is a family man. Despite the many Angstrom conflicts, an attracting force persists which cannot be specifically described but shows its presence most strongly after periods when it seems most obviously absent. Though not a salvation in itself, it explains a great deal about the movements of Updike's characters in these novels. He first noted it with an epigraph for *The Same Door* (and "Ace in the Hole"): "But there's no vocabulary / For love within a family . . . / This love is silent."[33] Because of its silence, love can easily go unnoticed, as the enmity proves much more dramatic and visible. Yet without both there can be no polarity, and without evenly balanced opposites the "truth" as Updike defines it cannot be intimated.

[1] John Updike, "Picked-Up Pieces," quoted in *John Updike: A Collection of Critical Essays,* eds. David Thornburn and Howard Eiland (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1979), p. 167.

[2] John Updike, "Honest Horn," in *Assorted Prose* (New York: Knopf, 1965), p. 272.

[3] See James K. Tuttleton, *The Novel of Manners in America* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1972), pp. 18–25, for a discussion of this bias and the theories behind it.

[4] Tony Tanner, *Adultery in the Novel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1979), p. 89.

[5] Maggie Scarf asserts in "Intimate Partners: Patterns in Love and Marriage," *Atlantic,* 258 (Nov. 1986), 47, "Despite the remarkably high incidence of marital infidelity, the discovery by one partner that the other is involved in an affair is usually experienced as a totally unexpected and catastrophic event. It is a disaster, like a death. . . ."

[6] Denis de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World,* trans. Montgomery Belgion, rev. ed. (New York: Pantheon, 1956), p. 45. Updike's essay on de Rougemont appeared in the early 1960s; see Updike, *Assorted Prose.*

[7] Frederick Crews, "Mr. Updike's Planet," *New York Review of Books,* 4 Dec. 1986, p. 12. Crews calls the nexus of *A Month of Sundays* and *Roger's Version* the most revealing of the essential Updike: "A lurking nihilism and a doctrinal obsession that barely keeps that nihilism at bay" (p. 14). To make such a point, he must restrict himself to those doctrinally oriented novels, and then identify their author with the cold and misogynist narrators. He must also ignore, except for some slanted and self-serving references, the Rabbit novels. It is true that Updike shares some preoccupations with those minister-narrators, but an element of irony is constantly present.

[8] John Updike, *The Same Door* (New York: Knopf, 1959), p. 16. Subsequent page references are cited parenthetically in the text as *SD.*

[9] Lionel Trilling, "The Meaning of a Literary Idea," in *The Liberal Imagination* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1953), p. 274.

[10] A process Updike speaks of in "Henry Bech Redux," *New York Times Book Review,* 17 Nov. 1971, p. 3.

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[11] John Updike, *Rabbit, Run* (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1983), p. 34. Subsequent page references are cited parenthetically in the text as *RR*. I chose this paperback edition as the most readily available of the final revised edition. See Randall H. Waldron's "Rabbit Revised," *American Literature*, 56 (Mar. 1984), 51–67.

[12] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Emerson in His Journals*, ed. Joel Porte (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982), p. 245.

[13] Quoted in George W. Hunt, S.J., *John Updike and the Three Great Secret Things: Sex, Religion, and Art* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 299.

[14] John Updike, "More Love in the Western World," in *Assorted Prose*, p. 299.

[15] Though Kruppenbach has no final authority in the novel (his "brick" hardness is a negation, and his dogmatism plus the motorcycle outside his house link him with the "scholastic" service station attendant), his presence has power and resiliency. His notion that a minister should rest content as an "exemplar of faith" (*RR*, p. 159) seems tougher than Eccles' social involvement skills, but essentially passive.

[16] John Updike, "Melville's Withdrawal," in *Hugging the Shore* (New York: Knopf, 1983), pp. 86, 104.

[17] John Updike, *Rabbit Redux* (New York: Knopf, 1971). Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text as *RRe*.

[18] Updike, *Rabbit, Run*, p. 29. When in *Rabbit Redux* he first meets Jill, he "senses in her a perfume of class. She excites him" (*RRe*, p. 126).

[19] Frances Fitzgerald's *Cities on a Hill: A Journey through Contemporary American Cultures* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986) considers the ideal in contemporary religious, gay, and retirement communities, showing its continued force.

[20] Updike, "More Love in the Western World," p. 299.

[21] De Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, p. 16.

[22] Updike discusses his attitudes towards such endings in "Magic Mirrors," in *Hugging the Shore*, p. 654.

[23] John Updike, "Happy on Nono Despite Odosha," in *Hugging the Shore*, p. 675.

[24] John Updike, *Rabbit Is Rich* (New York: Knopf, 1981), pp. 69, 99, 257. Subsequent page references are cited parenthetically in the text as *RIR*.

[25] Note also that Nelson's life contains the oddly maternal Melanie and moon-connected Pru; both provide mature counsel.

[26] *Rabbit, Run* is almost entirely a sequence of polarized, two-person scenes, and *Rabbit Redux* escapes that confinement in a sustained way only by means of Skeeter's prepared polemics, though these rather mechanical impositions seem more like disguised, two-person scenes with audience present.

[27] Net-and-web imagery dominates the crucial moments of Rabbit's first flight from Janice in *Rabbit, Run* (see pp. 32, 33, 34, 37). It is noted in *Rabbit Is Rich* that he has not flown for pleasure in the intervening twenty years (p. 388).

[28] The bikini echo comes in a Caribbean scene: "when Cindy rolls her body into a new position on the chaise, the straps have bitten laterally into her delicious fat, like tire treads in mud" (p. 397). The deviltry of Webb's horns is seconded by the numerous images associating him with Lucifer, gold stars (which also decorate the bank ceiling in Brewer [p. 372]), and in the Caribbean,

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stars "which hang in the sky with a certain menace, fragments of a frozen explosion" (p. 395). The reader might recall that "stagnant" Brewer itself is described as "a frozen explosion" in the first paragraph of *Rabbit Redux,* just before Rabbit's life begins to fall apart.

[29] Peter Kemp, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976), p. 818.

[30] "Lucinda" is the English form of the Latin "Lucere," to shine. Lucifer is Venus, the morning star, and by interpretation of Isaiah, 14:12 ("How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!"), Satan.

[31] Inside her body is "a void, a pure black box, a casket of perfect nothingness" (p. 417); "he can't take his mind from what he's discovered, that nothingness seen by his single eye" (pp. 418–19). Thelma says, "I don't care if this kills me" (p. 418).

[32] John Updike, "Fiabe Italiane, " in *Hugging the Shore,* p. 661.

[33] T. S. Eliot, "The Elder Statesman" (New York: Farrar, 1959).

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The Modern Lyric and Prospero's Island

Brian Conniff

W. H. Auden wrote *The Sea and the Mirror* as an epilogue to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*; at the same time, it is an epilogue to that part of Auden's life when he could believe in poetry as an important act. His rigid work schedule would not change significantly. He would still arrange his days so that he could rise early and spend all morning writing—after all, "one mustn't be bohemian."[1] He could still allow himself to write a good poem now and then, more or less by accident. He certainly saw no harm in writing mediocre poetry or "light verse" on purpose, in much the same way that he would complete countless crossword puzzles. After this great poem, however, he was careful not to take poetry too seriously.

But *The Sea and the Mirror* does not suffer from any lack of seriousness. Prospero's farewell speech is riddled by fearful ambivalence and Caliban speaks in an eloquent pastiche of Henry James's prose, but these transformations of Shakespeare's play are far from whimsical, because they illuminate Prospero's two great failures, both of which are critically important to Auden's "commentary" on the play and his own renunciation of poetry. One is Prospero's inability to feel comfortable in a faith that does not depend upon anything in the common world. The other is Caliban's subjection, a result of Prospero's inability to make him into an elegant man. With these failures, Prospero has broken both of the promises he made in his apprenticeship: "to hate nothing and to ask nothing for its love."[2] His dedication to magic should have been self-sufficient and his acceptance of slavery necessarily implies a hateful sense of superiority. So he wants to go back to Milan, even though he cannot give Ariel a convincing reason why his

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combination of magic and mastery was not enough—that is the cruel paradox of Prospero's brilliance. He says that he has recovered his dukedom after he no longer wants it, that away from Ariel's influence he can finally believe he will die, that his heavy books will be of no use on his final journey, that in Milan he will find it easier to be uninteresting—he cannot say anything convincing; he can only illustrate his dilemma, over and over. He keeps trying to explain until he recognizes that even at his death, despite all his eloquence and intelligence, he will be more like Caliban than he ever would have imagined, still just beginning to understand "the difference between moonshine and daylight."[3] He finally believes that he must renounce his magic gift and say goodbye to Ariel. Only then will he be able to arrive at even the slightest understanding of the most fundamental problems.

Auden's commentary on *The Tempest* allowed him to use Shakespeare's play for his own renunciation. Like his version of Prospero, Auden made a decision that is astonishing in the extent to which it oversimplified his situation and limited the possibilities of his gift. Auden's renunciation depended upon a blindness, maybe a willed blindness, to his poetic tradition, to the work of other modern poets, and even to his own earlier poetry. He never suggested that poetry might provide him with a method of devotion, as it did for Donne and Hopkins. He never suggested that it might provide him with a means of caring for his most immediate world, as it did for poets like William Carlos Williams and Basil Bunting. Auden found it necessary to act as though poetry were too pure and simple, too remote from the actual world—in other words, he depended upon an implied belief in the most rigid and basic lyric conventions, even though his earlier poetry had often challenged these conventions, even though the tradition did not necessarily support them. And even though he might often have liked to believe that his renunciation was not a very serious matter, it illuminates the central failures of conventional lyricism. A blindness to poetry's possibilities, falling back on the authority of lyric conventions, was not a mere quirk of Auden's: the same easy oversimplification has appeared repeatedly throughout the twentieth century, and one result is that poets and critics often contribute to the devaluation of poetry. Conversely, an effort to take poetry seriously typically becomes a difficult struggle with "the lyric."

Criticism of Auden's work suggests three important approaches to the years leading up to the completion of *The Sea and the Mirror* in 1944. In the oldest and most familiar approach, Auden's new beliefs were fundamentally a rejection of politics, part of a movement away from the

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early political poetry which culminated in "Spain 1937." After efforts to involve himself more directly in international politics, Auden seems to have abandoned any hope of committing himself to an actual party or cause. Stephen Spender has described Auden's silent discouragement after returning from the war in Spain.[4] Apparently, Auden's attempt to "cover" the Japanese invasion of China with Christopher Isherwood was equally discouraging.[5] Perhaps, as an outsider, Auden saw the struggles in Spain and China as larger and more threatening versions of the English world he had re-created in *Paid on Both Sides, Poems* (1930), and *The Orators*. In this world, with its ambivalent spies and counterspies, Auden first recognized the difficulties involved in trying to distinguish oppressors from oppressed, fascists from antifascists. Poetry was an attempt to understand which "side" he was on, an attempt to avoid, as much as possible, any complicity with fascism. But eventually, as Spender writes in *World within World,* Auden could no longer convince himself that his poetry was a political weapon:

> Although Auden's habits of work had not changed, his pattern of ideas was completely altered. He had shed all preoccupation with politics. In New York he explained to me that his politics in the 1930's had been based on the conviction that the anti-Fascists could really stop the war. When he realized that this view was mistaken, he had dropped his ideas which went with it. His becoming an American citizen had indeed underlined this, because he could never play in the United States a role corresponding to his English anti-Fascist one.[6]

Judging from these comments, Auden never elaborated on the crisis that he experienced before deciding to "shed all preoccupation with politics." For Spender, Auden's life showed a "unity of purpose": his commitment to poetry somehow transcended and overshadowed his ideological changes.[7] Humphrey Carpenter's more recent biography of Auden questions this "unity" by bringing together many of Auden's contradictory political statements, especially those from the period immediately following his move to America.

Auden arrived in the midst of public controversy over intervention in World War II. At times, his statements were distinctly pacifist. At other times, as in his highly problematic review of Reinhold Niebuhr's *Christianity and Power Politics*, he could be illogical in his efforts to avoid the issue completely. In this review, Auden made some of his first serious theological pronouncements, but declined even to mention the book's central call for American intervention. Then, he might switch to dogmatic interventionism: "The defeat of Hitler is the immediate

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necessity about which there can be no discussion."[8] One cannot merely dismiss this confusion as an intellectual game, or as one more camp attempt to use confusion as a disguise. Auden could never believe that poetry might transcend his fear of war. Rather, at this point in his career, he was forced, once again, to recognize that established political parties often resemble their enemies too crudely and too oppressively; and for some reason, it now seemed that the subtleties of poetry were especially unlikely to differentiate them.

So the "pattern of ideas" informing Auden's poetry became less public and less political—in particular, less identifiably Marxist. He even altered many of his earlier poems. Like many other readers, Joseph Warren Beach was struck by the revisions Auden made for the compilation of Random House's 1945 edition of his *Collected Poetry* and for Faber and Faber's 1950 edition of his *Collected Shorter Poems*. Beach's subsequent study, *The Making of the Auden Canon,* first explored the relation between Auden's abandoned beliefs and these revisions. Beach finally found himself "obliged to conclude that the poet, with the best of intentions, is virtually misrepresenting the thought which actually informed the earlier writing."[9] This "misrepresentation" is crucial, and Beach even made it the ground for demoting Auden from the highest rank of poets.[10] But the "best of intentions" were equally important, even though Beach did not consider them in any detail. In other words, Beach led up to a second important approach to Auden's poetry of this period, but did not go far enough. Auden's new ideas were predominantly theological, influenced by his idiosyncratic reading of Niebuhr, Charles Williams, and Søren Kierkegaard.[11] Beach sensed that Auden's "discovery" of these authors had something to do with the debilitation of his poetry. Beach did not consider the theologians especially important, however: Kierkegaard was only "an element of the eccentric or uncritical" which, unfortunately, "does not favor consistency in the work informed by it."[12] Still, almost despite himself, Beach suggested a religious approach to this period in Auden's career. Auden came to believe that poetry was unimportant when compared to loving God and loving one's neighbor. He even felt it necessary to revise and rearrange his canon in order to make it conform to his restored religious belief. In many cases, his "intention" was simply to make it appear that he had never taken poetry too seriously.

Auden's restored religious belief also brought with it a revised doctrine of guilt.[13] When Auden considered class struggle of primary importance, he saw class guilt paralyzing the private life of the bourgeoisie, unconsciously and symbolically, through rehearsed repres-

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sions and posh neuroses. Now, guilt resulted from a different type of lapse in personal commitment: a failure to accept God's will and love the ordinary world. But the idea that guilt results from a false relation to God did not really simplify anything. Any failure to love unconditionally could become a source of great confusion, because Auden's new religious values could not separate Thanatos from Eros, or class interest from compassion, with his earlier neo-Freudian precision. He could not easily understand a God who was quick to punish personal failure and reluctant to forgive desire. When this God seemed especially capricious, Auden might envision Her as a cross between one of the classical fates and a fussy old aunt: "Miss God appears to have decided that I am to be a writer, but that I am to have no other fun, and no talent for making others as happy as I would like them to be."[14] Theology, like politics, often seemed useless to Auden at this personal level. He had not only failed to make the world more free by contributing to the elimination of fascism; and he had not only maintained a false relation to God; he had also failed to make his lover happy, and could no longer feel capable of that kind of relation. That is the most striking point made by books like Carpenter's biography and Dorothy Farnan's *Auden in Love—The Sea and the Mirror* is not only a poem of artistic speculation and theological conversion, but also a specifically personal poem. Prospero's confusion in his farewell to Ariel is, to some extent, the result of Auden's own inability to come to terms with Chester Kallman's infidelity.[15]

Understandably, none of these approaches provide a simple answer. They all run together, from the most public to the most private, leaving a perception of Auden as a man with no clear way to protect himself against either public or private oppression, with no way even to distinguish them: "the prey of demonic powers, in both the Greek and Christian sense, stripped of self-control and self-respect, behaving like a ham actor in a Strindberg play."[16]

No matter which of these approaches one takes, one winds up thinking of Auden at the time he wrote *The Sea and the Mirror* as a man who often felt betrayed. The antifascists, at least those in Spain, had turned out to be as destructive and as hateful as the fascists in many cases. Perhaps some version of divinity, from Miss God to the Old Testament Patriarch, had played a series of tricks on him, and he could not tell whether it was out of maliciousness or some grand, benevolent design. Even worse, he might only have been tricked by Chester Kallman, or by his own overly idealized love for Chester.

More basically, though, Auden thought he had betrayed himself

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with his own gift for lyric poetry. This gift had led him to believe, even if only for short periods, in the imminent arrival of some superior alternative world, from the ultimate classless society at the end of time to a personal world fully redeemed by endless love. His gift had found his weakness—his ability to deny the actual, temporal world for such ideals—and had exploited this weakness to corrupt him. When Auden's Prospero is trying to say goodbye to Ariel, and at the same time trying not to say goodbye, Auden is trying to abandon his belief in serious poetry:

> Are you malicious by nature? I don't know
> Perhaps only incapable of doing nothing or of
> Being by yourself, and, for all your wry faces,
> May secretly be anxious and miserable without
> A master to need you for the work you need.
> Are all your tricks a test? If so, I hope you find,
> next time,
> Someone in whom you cannot spot the weakness
> Through which you will corrupt him with your charm.
> Mine you did
> And me you have: thanks to us both, I have broken
> Both of the promises I made as an apprentice:—
> To hate nothing and to ask nothing for its love.

Thanks to the two of them—the artist and his gift—mastery and dependence even entered the magic island. Ariel could act "anxious and miserable" without Prospero's attention, but he knew how to play upon the master's wish for "absolute devotion." And the endless possibilities of transformation and intoxicating music—Prospero's ideals, Ariel's charms—made the "extravagant children" washed ashore in the shipwreck appear to swagger "Out of the sea like gods"; they seemed beautiful enough for Prospero to ask them for their love, or beautiful enough for him to hate if his design failed. They could only return to "their human selves," ordinary citizens of Milan, after he broke his wand.

Auden's Prospero thinks of becoming old and sober the moment he tries to dissolve his partnership with Ariel, his source of lyric power. Through Ariel, he could defy passing time and replace it with harmonious arrangement, "With a smoother song / Than this rough world."[17] Now, Prospero can finally believe he will die; now he can think of an ordinary life without the instrument of his mastery, the spirit whose song could lead men into any trick of the enslaving island, boil their brains, make them see any vision, feel any terror, remorse, finally even humility. He knows that soon, once Ariel has gone and the magic wand has dissolved into the final indifference of the sea, no one will

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find him interesting any more; even Miranda will no longer pay him any attention as she dotes on Ferdinand. The ageless Magician will find himself just another old man sitting in a garden, every third thought the grave, with eyes that water easily in the wind. The man who once imposed his will on the entire natural and supernatural order will need servants to help him arrange his muffler and rugs, to help him settle his chair "in some well-sheltered corner of the garden."[18]

Still, Prospero should believe that the human care he will find in Milan will provide more than enough consolation for the loss of his island. Miranda might be too struck with dumb infatuation ever to notice, but someone will always remain loyal, as Gonzalo did; after all, even when Prospero turned his back on the state in his desire to perfect his magic, his people's love made it impossible for Antonio to murder him. Once sober and cared for, he should be content. He might even wonder why he ever wanted to give up his dukedom, "common warmth and touching substance, for a gift in dealing with shadows."[19] He should not miss the shadows and the unearthly music, the feeling of drunkenness that he only remembers at the last moment before he leaves; he should not even miss Ariel.

But Prospero knows that he will miss them all. And he will feel guilty each time he misses them, because he interprets these moments of regret as lapses of faith. Whenever he tries more directly to confront the uncertainty of his present situation, he feels his faith on the verge of disintegration: "despair is constantly in the present tense."[20] Then, he is no longer certain that he wants to continue his passage into the discomfort of Milan, the pedestrian journey "through a universe where time is not foreshortened."[21] Still, he wants to believe that the denial of his magic gift is his only way of returning to the common world. In his youth, his magic taught him how to avoid "The gross insult of being a mere one among many."[22] As he perfected his skills, an ordinary life seemed more and more dreadful until, under Ariel's influence, death was inconceivable. Now, when he prepares to return to Milan, he tries to demystify himself, beginning with the realization that he will die. If he has any hope of contentment in the common world, it is because this realization might be the start of a new faith. According to Kierkegaard, whom Prospero frequently quotes, the moments in which he accepts the common world might lead him, paradoxically, away from despair, the sickness unto death, and toward the serenity that he has always desired—a lasting serenity that only death can provide. So he categorically abandons his gift. Reverting to an old habit, he tries to hide his regrets with his learning and his eloquence.

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The flickers of regret in Prospero's farewell to Ariel could be the beginning of a completely new and more difficult education. In his old age, Prospero is only beginning to understand the radical uncertainty that results from a total confrontation with the familiar, temporal world. Once he leaves the island and returns to Milan, he will no longer have the comfort of a perspective foreshortened by visions from any happy end. Without magic, he cannot see his life and his world as one harmonious arrangement. Alone, on foot, without floating or flying, he can only see his proximate situation: "For, while ultimately the Christian message is the good news: 'Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill towards men—' 'Come unto me all that travail and are heavy laden and I will refresh you': it is proximately to man's self-love the worst possible news—'Take up thy cross and follow me.' "[23] Prospero hopes that he understands this message when he packs his bags to leave. He hopes he has arrived at the "religious movement by virtue of the absurd, which comes to pass when it reaches the borders of the marvelous," the moment of completely accepting his finite condition and gaining, absurdly, the infinite as a transparent relation to God. If he can fully renounce his enchanting island, the borders of the marvelous should appear for him in Milan, in the actual world saturated with death where he has no recourse to mystification. No matter how difficult it is for Prospero to understand this Kierkegaardian paradox, he wants to believe in it unconditionally.

But Prospero tries so hard to sound convincing that his declaration of faith in his new condition comes across as a futile stab at compensation. He says that he is glad he did not have his dukedom when he wanted it, that he is glad Miranda does not really understand him. He even claims that he would rather think about death than take Ariel back with him. Of course, each member of the cast replies, sotto voce, and Caliban addresses the audience at length. Not one of them, however, takes Prospero at his word. Caliban's brilliant mixture of camp aesthetics, begged questions, and logical paradoxes only raises larger and more difficult problems. Even Ariel, who proved at the end a loyal spirit, knows that the entire farewell speech is Prospero's attempt to avoid feeling the dislocation of the present moment, to deaden his own sorrow at the end of their partnership—Prospero has not yet learned to suffer "without saying something funny or ironic about suffering."[24] He cannot convince himself—let alone his subjects, least of all the audience—that the return to Milan is worth giving up Ariel and the island. Prospero's faith is not as strong as he would like to pretend.

As its subtitle states, *The Sea and the Mirror* is "A Commentary on

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Shakespeare's *The Tempest.*" In Auden's poem, even after all the songs have been sung and Caliban's address has multiplied the play's dilemmas, the extreme compensatory irony of Prospero's farewell speech remains the central criticism of Shakespeare's play. Auden suggests that Shakespeare has tried to trick his audience into accepting, too simply, a doubtful decision. In *The Tempest,* when Prospero appears to the assembled cast, wearing the robes of state again and announcing himself as "The wrongéd Duke of Milan, Prospero," the moment seems triumphant and easily understandable. But the Prospero who matters most to Auden is the incomprehensible magician; on his return to the ordinary world, he will appear feeble, almost ridiculous in comparison. On the island, he always felt that he was at the borders of the marvelous: he could always feel some relation to the infinite in his magic power over that finite world. Now, when he is not careful, this world of his own that he gained by turning his back on Milan seems greater than the dukedom he is about to regain. He can only imagine himself greater as a magician than as an aging politician: he sees his ability to control shadows and illusions as a gift, and he knows that the people who care for him in Milan will not really understand him; they will never know, as they provide for his simplest needs, that he has sailed alone, "out over seventy thousand fathoms."[25]

Prospero's new pedestrian journey already seems to him a failed attempt, because he cannot escape his desire for the marvelous flights, at least not his desire for those within his own mind, where they matter somehow to everything he will do. Still addicted to these great manic moments, he can only imagine himself in Milan as a helpless cripple, incapable of even the simplest things. Even if he tries very hard, and has some luck, by the time "death pounces / His stumping question," Prospero will still resemble Caliban more than he ever would have imagined, "just getting to know / The difference between moonshine and daylight."[26] On the island, with Ariel and his magic, he was always magnificent.

In *The Tempest,* we realize this point when it is too late to admit any serious regrets, after Prospero has stepped out to address the audience at the end of the play. Then, for the first time, he resembles Auden's old man in the garden. The Duke of Milan finally appears powerless; he requires the audience's indulgence to get back home. If he holds his book of magic up to the enemies of the state, he will appear at least a little like a fool, not like the terrifying master who held the book up to Caliban. Only the island was a world where he could find dukedom enough in his books. This similarity between Shakespeare's play and

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Auden's epilogue involves a perverse morality: Prospero will not remain at the borders of the marvelous where he might have had everything. Instead, he believes that he must sacrifice his unimaginable gift in order to return to a world where his most manic flights will only further estrange him. With this recognition, all the difficulties that surround such a gift become urgent questions: Must his powers of imagination and transformation necessarily estrange him from the actual world? Can he sacrifice these powers and remain intact? Can he find some personal commitment, political or theological, that will restore their value—to use Auden's later terms, can he make them instruments through which he can love his neighbor or his God?

All of these problems also have public implications, because Prospero is never actually alone. He only exchanges one system of authority for another: cast out, he drifted far from his dukedom, but Miranda went with him, even though she might well have been less comfort than he claimed, and Caliban and Ariel both had ways of appearing much too human. Prospero could encircle himself—teach Caliban at least to curse, provoke a sense of human pathos in Ariel, raise Miranda to understand their exile in some way, and perhaps do them all more good than harm—but he could never completely isolate himself. So he always remains involved in one of the systems of power described in the poem and in the play as networks of master-slave relationships—that is, he remains within a political world, however small. One system, in Milan, gives Prospero what seems like greater responsibility—we are used to thinking of responsibility in degrees—but also involves him in a more complicated and potentially more harmful hierarchy where mastery and slavery operate on many levels; the other system, on the island, allows him to protect and support his magic gift more fully, but does not allow him to escape either the will to human subjection or the need for human care. Authority always lies in much the same language, though its methods change; even if Caliban's "nature" thrives on slavery in some way, he is Prospero's impervious disgrace. In addition, on the island Prospero feels guilty that he has left behind the seemingly greater responsibility in Milan.

Prospero does not have a clear choice, then, between the terms of his dialectics: magic and warmth, shadow and substance, illusion and reality. No such choices really exist in any simple way. To complicate matters even further, these considerations say nothing about the artist's responsibility to his own gift, or about its remote consequences for himself and those who surround him: Prospero uses his magic to punish his enemies; but his magic also brings them back to him, so he

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can begin to understand the fellow-feeling that allows him to forgive. All of these blurred distinctions suggest the one fundamental point that Auden never seemed to recognize in his own renunciation: that the dichotomy between his serious early poetry and his restored religious belief was his own creation.

Similarly, the blurred dialectics only compel Auden's Prospero to deny the presumption that his gift is ultimately important. He has consciously decided to return to an ordinary life, even though he cannot rid himself of the guilt and ambivalence that he hardly understands. He has not even come to the recognition that "consciously to give less than all would be a gross betrayal of his gift and an unpardonable presumption—as if it lay in *his* power to solve this dilemma."[27] That is, by simply deciding to return to Milan, Prospero has come no closer to admitting his actual situation: that he found himself given a problematic yet undeniable gift for magic, that the betrayal of this gift is just as presumptuous as the assertion of its ultimate value, and that he is not by himself capable of understanding the dilemma. He wants to return to the actual world, but he still does not know how to face it. He does not have the type of faith that Kierkegaard describes as "the condition of the self when despair is completely eradicated."[28] Such faith does not result from renunciation, but from a fundamental affirmation, a "willing to be" that does not deny actuality in any way. Such faith would cause him to recognize that his gift, even if it is a gift in magic, remains an immediate and inescapable part of his situation in the world. Without this faith, Prospero can only try to sacrifice his gift because it seems to have no clear connection to the personal love he desires, or try to hide it from the people who care for him as he grows old, because he cannot use it to transform *their* world. Each of these relations to his gift is the beginning of a retreat into solipsism, because each is based on a concealment of the self—especially his manic flights—from the actual world. As this solipsism progresses, communication with the outside world becomes a violation of the self. Ultimately, the only meaning that Prospero can recognize in such a state is silence: "Yet if I speak, I shall sink without a sound / Into unmeaning abysses."[29]

Just as one must be careful not to accept Prospero's oversimplification of his dilemma, one must also be careful not to oversimplify his solipsism. This solipsism results, paradoxically, from trying to care for the world too completely; it is like Mallarmé's contemplation of suicide as Sartre considers it: "murmuring of the society he had wanted to construct: 'Have no doubt that this work was to be most beautiful.' "[30]

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When one fully desires such a transformation of the actual world, one risks leaving politics for a belief in magic. When one becomes fully convinced of its impossibility, the result will often be an attempt to make the world seem less important by relating it to an ideal, thus distancing oneself from the previous position of intense care: "No, one could not turn the world upside down: he would place it in parentheses. He opted for the terrorism of politeness: between himself and other things, other men, even his own being, he always managed to preserve an imperceptible distance."[31]

Mallarmé first tried to realize this distance in his poetry; Auden first tried to realize it in his theology, and only secondly let it debilitate his poetry. In the introduction to *Kierkegaard,* he envisioned God as a great magician who makes the world appear extremely temporary and unimportant, parenthetical: "To believe that a world of nature exists, i.e., of things which happen of themselves, is not, however, invariably made. Magicians do not make it (the Christian expression for this presumption is the dogma, 'In the beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth')."[32] In relation to this God, even Shakespeare's Prospero was a very minor magician; he believed that both Milan and the island were there before him and would survive him. Auden wanted to go further, but recognized his presumption; accordingly, his magician in *The Sea and the Mirror* becomes a mournful and ambivalent figure. Sartre's Mallarmé would have understood, because he too finally made his poetry, which once tricked him into thinking it could give him power over an entire world, into something parenthetical:

> So his poetry itself came to be placed in parentheses. One day someone sent him a few drawings; he liked them, but what particularly attracted him was the sketch of an old magician with a mournful smile: "It comes from knowing," he commented, "that his art is a fraud. But at the same time he seems to be saying: 'Yet it might have been the truth.' "[33]

The God to whom Auden turned was for Mallarmé only a "discredited ideology," with remnants still crumbling in his head. But at the same time, Auden's god was not really the God of Kierkegaardian Christianity. Auden's denial of his gift was a denial of himself on some level, because it made his earlier anti-Fascist poetry, with all its Marxist and neo-Freudian influences, appear to be the result of a simple will to transcend. His renunciation, then, like Prospero's despair, was an act irreconcilable with Kierkegaard's movement toward religious faith, which is a process of the present self "relating itself to its own self" and "willing to be itself," and thus finding itself "grounded transparently in

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the power which posited it."[34] Auden had read Kierkegaard very thoroughly, but he had not reached this level of faith; if he had, he would not have felt the need to distance his poetry from his more "serious" religious beliefs. Poetry could have been more than an ideal. It could have been one way of loving his neighbor and his God. It could have been one way of grounding himself "transparently in the Power which posited it." The magician God of Auden's denial had more in common with the psychopathic God of the totalitarian state whom Auden envisioned in "September 1, 1939." In any case, he had come very far from what he wrote as late as February, 1939, ostensibly about Voltaire:

> He'd done his share of weeping for Jerusalem: As a rule
> It was the pleasure-haters who became unjust.
>
> Yet, like a sentinel, he could not sleep. The night
> was full of wrong,
> Earthquakes and executions. Soon he would be dead,
> And still all over Europe stood the horrible nurses
> Itching to boil their children. Only his verses
> Perhaps could stop them: He must go on working. Overhead
> The uncomplaining stars composed their lucid song.

The horrible nurses belong to the type of figure—including the surrealist police and the fashionable madmen in earlier poems—which appears whenever Auden's poetry reaches the border of political poetry without quite becoming political. They were once the inhabitants of the early solipsistic world of Mortmere about to become real.[35] Later, as he was about to give up serious poetry, they began to appear again—the horrible nurses, the dense commuters, the nonattached angels—but Auden would lose faith in their power as soon as they began once again to allow him to believe that his poetry could be the basis of important action in the public world.

Auden reached the border again, but this time by way of a retreat into a new and more permanent solipsism. He wrote "Rimbaud," "Matthew Arnold," and the Yeats elegy in the same brief period in which he wrote "September 1, 1939"—for a short time he was highly productive but almost completely ambivalent. He could not decide whether "Verse was a special illness of the ear" which could make nothing happen, or the "affirming flame" which could eventually "undo the folded lie" of Authority and collapse its skyscrapers of collective despair. Prospero's farewell to Ariel was to be the last important articulation of this ambivalence. An oversimplified concept of lyric

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poetry—the poem as a transcendence, or avoidance, of the actual world—would become Auden's convenient escape, as it never was in his earlier poetry. He came to believe that his lyric gift had allowed him to get tricked, both politically and sexually, and then he could no longer believe in either the apocalyptic magic of visionary politics or the ritual magic of sexuality. Consequently, he lost faith in the effectiveness of politics and sexuality—his early fusions of Marxism and neo-Freudianism—as weapons in his poetry. He no longer believed that political poetry could "make action urgent and its nature clear"; he no longer believed that poetry could help teach erotic love how to cure his culture's epidemic repressions. Poetry was too pure, a "closed system," an ideal, and as he knew from his reading of Kierkegaard, ideals could only lead him to devalue actuality.[36]

Shakespeare's Prospero and Kierkegaard's Knight of Faith were just two of the "literary characters" Auden invoked in his brief effort to reconcile serious poetry with his restored religious belief. Even if political action and his "marriage" had failed, he still would have liked to believe that his vast learning might provide an answer, a "fixed center" of some kind. He was wrong. His learning provided too many answers, and not one was as simple as he would have liked. Auden considered Don Quixote, Lear and his fool; he considered Valéry's serpent, who "cries out against God":

> Il se fit Celui qui dissipe
> En consequences, son Principe,
> En étoiles, son Unité.[37]

Auden kept falling into Prospero's trap. In one way after another, he tried to negate all the uncertainties of his own situation in a single brilliant expression. He tried to find an answer to poetry's estrangement in poetry itself. Then, the figurative and logical complexity of his favorite poetry only seemed to lead him further away from the common world, and further away from the simple answer he wanted to find. The infinite dispersal of stars, the radical uncertainty of actual consequences from any first principle; the "silent dissolution of the sea" surrounding Prospero's island, the seductive mirrors of Ariel's "calm eyes" in which "all we are not stares back at what we are"—the poetic "ideas" were all fascinating, and some were very beautiful, but Auden finally convinced himself that they would only distract him from life's basic religious problems. These ideas were "the *Abgrund,* the abyss of infinite potentiality." None of them could tell him how to accept the common world without prolonged despair; none of them could tell him how to love his neighbor and his God, simply and humbly.

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Therefore, Auden had to deny, categorically, his early poetry's suggestion of infinite possibilities. This denial would not be so important if it were a mere idiosyncrasy; but as he searched for a way out of Prospero's trap, he continued to find the same problem in virtually all of the literature he valued most. One important figure after another became infatuated with the possibilities of imagination, and one important work after another concluded with the rejection of these possibilities. As Auden's "Commentary" on *The Tempest* suggests, Shakespeare concludes with *his* Prospero making this kind of renunciation, without the existential dread experienced by Auden's Prospero. Auden even became suspicious of his most beloved operas, and he tended to reduce them to a morality of imaginative possibility: "Don Giovanni's pleasure in seducing women is not sensual but arithmetical; his satisfaction lies in adding one more name to the list which is kept for him by Leporello."[38] A sensual idolatry would not have troubled Auden so much, but he feared he had discovered a more fearful and more modern evil. In the past, the Devil would appear in a "finite" form, "as the manifestation of some specific temptation, as a beautiful woman, a bag of gold, etc." The modern age faced a more numinous and more dangerous adversary: "In our age there are no idols in the strict sense because we tire of them so quickly and take up another that the word cannot apply. Our real, because permanent idolatry is an idolatry of possibility."[39] Faust was "the typical modern figure": infatuated with his own imagination, his greatest fear was boredom. Mephisto, preferably played by Faust's identical twin, was "the manifestation of possibility without actuality."

In at least one sense, Auden was correct in asserting the modernity of this problem. When he renounced serious poetry, he might have thought that he had finally escaped his personal version of the great modern idolatry. He might even have thought that he had rejected Mephisto, as Faust could not. But Auden himself had become, ironically, an important "modern figure" of a different type. His oversimplified dichotomy between poetic possibilities and everyday actuality has appeared repeatedly in the twentieth century. Poets and critics have frequently relied upon this dichotomy—a "critical" creation—and one effect is that they have contributed to the devaluation of poetry.

Cecil Day Lewis, for example, began the 1964–65 Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at Harvard with the following questions, variously repeated and rephrased:

> We shall have to ask ourselves whether "the singing line" is now, to all intents and purposes of serious poetry, ended; whether it

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> can be renewed, and whether it ought to be. We have been taught to admire complexity, intellectual toughness, irony, sometimes to the exclusion of other poetic virtues, is this right?[40]

These questions are a repetition, in more conventional and academic terms, of Auden's effort to deal with lyricism's limited ability to transform the world. Day Lewis apparently meant to attribute the highest value to poetry, just as Auden once did, but he never managed to recognize one point that was crucial to Auden's renunciation: the more "poetic virtues" appear to be pure and simple, the easier it is to dismiss poetry.

On this point, Day Lewis is like many of his contemporaries, even those with backgrounds very different from his own and Auden's. Day Lewis' criticism—like most other modern criticism that calls for pristine "poetic virtues"—involves a blindness to poetry's possibilities at least as striking as Auden's renunciation. Long after Pound had pushed forward the revitalization of modern poetry with economics and history, long after Williams had led a full-scale attack against conventional metrics and rhythm even in short poetry, Day Lewis could speak of "the singing line" as a distinct and exclusive norm. He could praise poetic purity at the same time that Charles Olson was writing about man's estrangement from his own mind and immediate actuality. He could call for simplicity of expression in the midst of American escalation in Vietnam and the official public language that intentionally obscured it, and while R. D. Laing was writing about man's estrangement from his own mind. Through it all, Day Lewis managed to believe in the pure and simple, and managed to maintain a surprising lack of urgency.

The greatest irony in the historical context of Day Lewis' lectures was that political necessities, mental and physical division and estrangement, as well as the battles of literary politics, were all having particularly significant effects on the contemporary poetry worth considering "lyric" in any vital way. This context forced poets with "lyric" gifts to write themselves out of ambivalence and toward a relation to their work that was more authentic: a relation that would not separate poetry from actuality and demand a choice between the two. "The singing line" would acquire new complexities, toughness, and irony—even speculation *about* lyric poetry would finally find it difficult to act as though the lyric were somehow "pure."

Day Lewis clearly assumed that a long tradition supported his concept of the lyric. He was correct, in a way: the "lyric" had long been the most fortified stronghold of classificatory criticism as applied to

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poetry, and it had long been the last refuge of poetic purists. Nonetheless, Day Lewis' assumption, though common, requires an oversimplification of the tradition that is also similar to the blindness of Auden's renunciation. One immediately wonders how Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* or Donne's *Holy Sonnets,* for example, fit into any genre of poetry that avoids complexity, intelligence, and mastered irony. Instead of Day Lewis' questions, one winds up asking why literary figures, poets as well as critics, so often act as though the lyric tradition were stable and readily agreed upon, and why they would associate a tradition they value so highly with simplicity rather than intellect, with an escape from the world's concerns rather than an intensified engagement. The lyric tradition, then, as Day Lewis described it, had ended long before he ever began to wonder if it might be in danger. One can argue, in fact, that it never existed, that "poetic virtues" were never so simple, never so pure. Did it exist, and when did it end, are questions only worth asking for the purpose of raising further questions, until the entire scheme of generic classification is suspect.

But even in more recent criticism, the frequency with which the term "lyric" is used, often with little explanation, might suggest that the genre exists as a clearly delineated sequence of poems.[41] In particular, the poetic characteristics associated with timelessness turn up with a high level of predictability: unquestioned faith in a perfect order removed from the world; innocence, typically as the lack of any personal guilt for valuing this removal; and disaffiliation, the public mask of private innocence. These characteristics are contrary to the convoluted eloquence with which Prospero says goodbye to his magic and his will to order. And they are contrary to the complexities of Auden's early poetry, where he felt more at home with his lyric gift. A partial reversal of value takes place in *The Sea and the Mirror* when Prospero's care for the actual world makes him self-conscious about his aestheticism. He is left with no clear choices, only a disorienting ambivalence; he can only be sure of his desire for the general categories that might give him easy answers. In fact, all of his knowledge only brings into question those categories—timelessness, innocence, disaffiliation—that might restrict his imagination to some alternative world. In poetry, too, the lyric conventions are there for the poet to revise ironically: they can become his means, once he has returned to the ordinary world, of resisting appropriation into the institutions he distrusts.

This concept of literary conventions depends upon a literary history more than Day Lewis' "lyricism" does. In order to resist

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appropriation and simplification by the literary-critical mainstream, the poet must know the conventions as the mainstream understands them. He must cultivate, in other words, a self-consciousness about the systems of power to which his writing will find itself subjected. "Lyricism" presents this problem most directly: the poet cannot merely assume that unself-conscious writing will manage to avoid conventionality, because the most deeply ingrained lyric conventions are those associated with the lack of self-consciousness. And if he wants to keep his poems from becoming only anthology selections or the harmless objects of classroom exercises, he must also know something about the stock methods used to distribute and disembody poetry in these ways.[42] His recourse is to study the conventions carefully, not to show how they descend in a straight historical line, authoritative and well understood, into their lesser descendants, but to question conventionality, as it forces recent and contemporary poetry to become more complex, more "intellectually tough," more complicated by the type of "mastered irony" that Kierkegaard describes in *The Concept of Irony*.[43] It is this struggle with conventionality that forces the modern lyric poet either to establish a more authentic relation to his own gift, or finally to dismiss poetry as unimportant. Conventionality, then, is not a set of agreed-upon characteristics—whether of subject, prosody, form, or anything else—and not the parameters that clearly enclose a genre. Rather, conventionality is the process through which such characteristics are invented as a critical act, make poems appear less complex and less vital as they gain critical acceptance, and thus force poets to become aware of their literary-political context.[44]

This process of appropriation must be understood in the widest sense, because it involves academics, publishers, editors, poets, and groups of poets; it also involves authority, distribution, pedagogy, affiliation, revision, and influence—and any number of smaller and more subtle problems. The self-consciousness that the poet develops in this process largely creates the paradox of the "modern lyric": disparate poems that consciously question and lose faith in a perfect order removed from the world; in which personal responsibility and guilt never allow a lyric innocence, a simple disaffiliation from social and political concerns; in which the public and the private unavoidably run together.[45]

For Day Lewis, this poetry would seem unimaginable. In his terms, self-consciousness runs directly counter to "the lyric impulse": "Once a poet begins thinking in terms of sincerity, he lays himself open to that self-consciousness which clogs the springs of the lyric impulse."[46] This

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reference to "sincerity," like his references to intellect, irony, and toughness, has a clear source in the writing of the British "Movement" poets. But Day Lewis immediately assumes a more expansive view, taking into consideration "civilized man's increasing self-consciousness" and his antagonism to the pure lyric. Although he appeared at Harvard on a very late day for purists, he did not manage to see the most important threat to his ordered sense of things. The greatest challenges, even twenty years ago, were not Davie, Larkin, and Gunn; Day Lewis' concept of poetry had more to fear from Bunting, Olson, Creeley, and Zukofsky. But the more challenging poets were less recognized, especially in England, and they did not share a particularly well-known manifesto to make them appear as a unified force.[47]

Even more importantly, in reference to Day Lewis' discussion of "the singing line" and its possible end, the more challenging poets self-consciously play upon their apparent connections to lyric conventions: an analogy between poetry and song is one example that applies to important poems by each. At the same time, they undermine any notion of the lyric as something necessarily "smoother, purer, simpler." Their poetry effectively proves that the "springs" of lyricism do not clog with the exercise of intelligence, or with a calculated disdain for any stab at removal from the actual world, public or private. In reference to the Movement, this poetry proves that complexity, toughness, and irony do not necessitate a highly restricted poetry, whether Little Englandism or Little New Englandism. But this poetry does not, in either frame of reference, directly answer the questions asked by Day Lewis, so much as it makes them appear too easy and too late. Poetry appears less and less a "line," more and more a dispersion; but it still seems vital, more vital because it really becomes a "serious poetry" that is not content to remain smooth and pure and simple.

In either case, we have only recently found ourselves at the most fundamental understanding of all these problems. Auden began to recognize the problems with his character Prospero, disturbed at having to face, at such a late date, the most basic questions about his art and its meaning in his world. But Prospero, like Auden himself, chose renunciation instead of a continued and difficult questioning. Now, it is necessary to begin the full contextualization of lyric poetry, to begin to break open "the singing line" as a straight line of descent or an enclosed genre. Only through such a prolonged questioning will we approach a better understanding of conventionality: the ways that some poems gain power by holding tenuously to lyric conventions, despite an overall thrust that one might call "revolutionary."[48] Revolution, in this sense,

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needs something to turn upon; the poem retains some trace of the order it overthrows. The tenuousness is also a part of the power. When the most effective poems repeat a convention, they do not attempt to recollect the past, as poetic form or as historical circumstance; they deform the convention to bring poetry out of a mystified, ordered tradition and into the actual world:

> Birds—birds—nozzles of horses, washed plank in air . . .
> For they have no manes we would give them manes,
> For their wood was dead wood the wood would move—bare
> But for the print on it—for diggers gone, trains
> Run, light lights on air where the dead reposed—
> As many as take liveforever, "Street Closed."

The sonnet by Zukofsky that ends with these lines depends upon Shakespeare's sonnets for much of its effectiveness. But the rhyme and ten-syllable lines are not attempts to "close" the poem and achieve a formal order that somehow "transcends" the ordinary world; this kind of prosody is a system of allusions to specific conventions of poetic form, and to all these conventions have come to mean through centuries of interpretation. With these allusions, Zukofsky could demonstrate his lack of faith in a perfect order removed from the world, and his lack of faith in every aspect of the tradition that values such removal. The poem becomes a document; no longer merely poetic figures of speech, its horses become the wooden horses put up to block an actual road.

Because Zukofsky refused to imagine that his poetry could transcend the ordinary world, he was consciously concerned with his inability to use his gift exactly the way he would like. The poet might want a sonnet to endure as a monument to a lover for whom it was written, but the possibility of the poem surviving its living subject is, at best, a false consolation. At worst, it is a betrayal, an attempt to devalue the lover by placing ultimate value in the work of art. Zukofsky's sonnet might survive longer than the workers who are its subject, but to "light lights where the dead reposed" only illuminates a space that has been vacated. Even when expressed in the mock-lyric poetics of "liveforever," desire itself cannot bring back the "diggers gone."[49] The poet can no longer pretend that poetry can somehow "distill" the essence of those caught up in "Devouring Time," and thus provide an escape from death. He can no longer retreat into the Romantic Sublime, because his desire cannot animate the material world in order to make it sympathetic to his emotions.[50] Consequently, any analogy between his desire and the natural cycles now results from a schism rather than

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from a belief in universal sympathy, and only makes him more aware of his estrangement. Instead, he has a sense of urgency that makes affiliation crucial. Accordingly, Zukofsky's sonnets resist any further estrangement from common labor, and the poem *A*, in its larger scale, incorporates a more fully articulated politics to further the resistance.

This relationship to the tradition provides answers to Day Lewis' questions, but answers clearly opposed to any the questions had anticipated. The "singing line" still exists—has in fact become more vital—but it does not derive in any direct linear descent from a stable tradition, and it only involves "singing" in an ironic and self-conscious sense. The poem gains power from each deformed tradition and, paradoxically, the tradition has some of its vitality restored. This vitality is the opposite of a timeless, ordered canon of great works; it results from the changing history of poetry, constantly revised, when "The knowledge of the past is desired only for the service of the future and the present."[51] Critical history of this kind is particularly important throughout this passage of *A*, a sequence of sonnets transforming from the Shakespearean to the Miltonic. With this sense of constant revision, poetic history can become part of a larger and more important history—in this case, the history of class struggle. The tradition, then, does not have to remain a sanctuary for antiquarians.[52] The complex prosody of *A*, with its shifts from relative formlessness and virtually gratuitous form, in and out of the passages that appear as a type of formally ordered evolution, can effectively comment on both political history, with its chance occurrences and the ordered systems willed upon them, and on the personal psychology that provides our most immediate understanding of these imposing acts of will and their effect on our private lives.

Prosody, then, works with time and sequence, as a type of calculus, to sound all the possibilities of a polysemous poem. The immersion in time, history, and multiple meaning undermines the conventional "poetic virtues" as values in themselves, but now the conventions can serve more effectively as allusions to past poetry or as allusions to our desire for lyric removal. These possibilities of allusion do not simply reaffirm the traditional values, though: any word or phrase in the "modern lyric" can make the poem more effective by making it less smooth, less pure, less simple. The "birds" in the Zukofsky sonnet work just this way: their effectiveness results from the multiplicity of meaning they introduce into the short passage. In the context of "A-7," the birds are at one time a highly conscious symbol for "Him! Whom? *The Son / Of Man*"; poetic material for "the sonneteers . . . of the Classics and of /

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Tradition . . . Who sang of women raped by horses" and other bestial incarnations: one result of gratuitous prosody, a word chosen, in this case, primarily because it rhymes with "words," and bringing with it associational and therefore psychological meaning; the actual birds in Brooklyn, perched on the wooden horse that block the road during a labor strike.[53]

The last two meanings are especially important, because they make the poem a testament to Zukofsky's authentic relation to his own lyric gift. He could not allow the more "poetic" or "symbolic" meanings to devalue the actual objects; his authentic relation required a high level of attention and care for the common world, especially when one considers the explicitly stated politics and poetics of *A*. Still, such care does not deny the importance of form in such a poem, so long as one realizes that form has no transcendent value. Nor does it have any value as evidence of a mastery that satisfies the artistic ego, because the choice of a particular form is always to some extent arbitrary. Formal demands can even gain priority over logical sequence, allowing the poem to "outwit" the poet in a psychologically projective prosody.[54] Even the most tradition-ridden forms—the sonnet for instance—do not provide easy signs of a poem that is "closed," "restricted," or hyper-rational. Instead, the poem gains psychological authenticity by providing a record of the ways that formal order has invaded even our subconscious minds and, in a larger sense, all aspects of our secret lives. Then the lyric becomes a record of the least obvious effects of political and social order, not an escape from them into the "eternal order" implied when form is given metaphysical value; the poem becomes involved in history, not an escape from history. The lyric gift is no longer a curse the poet must escape out of commitment to the actual world, or out of the guilt brought on by his estrangement.

The contemporary poet can no longer take seriously the well-known figure of the lyric poet with his back turned on the daily concerns of the world, singing simple songs that still manage to express his deepest concerns, never interested in any audience other than himself, or possibly a solitary lover. This figure was an extreme critical invention that concealed as much about the tradition as it revealed. In an earlier modern version, it helped provide Auden with the oversimplified terms he could use to dismiss poetry.

But then, as Auden knew, there are times when many writers' "works / Are in better taste than their lives": his Prospero avoids at least such a gross oversimplification of the problem.[55] Now, the conventional figure of the lyric poet has given way to a personality more complicated,

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ambivalent, and fearful. This personality is more familiar to existential phenomenology than to mainstream literary criticism; he resembles both Sartre's Mallarmé and Auden's Prospero:

> His whole life had been torn between his desire to reveal himself and his desire to conceal himself. We all share this problem with him and we have all arrived at a more or less satisfactory solution. We have our secrets and our needs to confess. We may remember how, in childhood, adults at first were able to look right through us, and what an accomplishment it was when we, in fear and trembling, could tell our first lie, and make, for ourselves, the discovery that we are irredeemably alone in certain respects, and know that within the territory of ourselves there can be only one set of footprints. There are some people, however, who never fully realize themselves in this position. This genuine privacy is the basis of genuine relationship.[56]

When this process of realization occurs in lyric poetry, it leaves the poet in a state of fear and trembling; it opens him to the experience of continuing despair. The despair is not primarily a matter of philosophical speculation, but a daily fact. The poet has exposed himself, though perhaps with many types of concealment, to oppressive political, literary-political, and critical machines that he hardly understands. The criticism and editorship that have dealt with modern poetry in England and America—to say nothing of important modern poets like Yeats, Eliot, and Pound—have too often shown disturbingly close connections to oppressive politics. The problem not only involves the proto-fascism of a journal like *Blast,* but also many more recent and allegedly benign or apolitical approaches.[57] The importance of a lyric poet's authentic relation to his gift—based upon an extreme privacy, "the discovery that we are irredeemably alone in certain respects," but always encountering the actual world—becomes most obvious when the machinery of authority becomes most oppressive: Stalin's government went through a variety of complications to get rid of Mandelstam, whose poetry mixed concealment with revelation, impersonation of the enemy with defiance, and they still did not eliminate most of his writing; Stalin would have had no trouble exterminating Mallarmé.[58] With his less complex relation to authority, Mallarmé is less modern, though often held up as a paradigm of modernity.[59]

In such a climate, the most gifted are likely to seem the most cursed. From the early Auden to the late Zukofsky, as in many other historical periods, poetry had to struggle against a literary-political climate that favored restriction over experimentation, dilletantism over serious challenges to the conventions. In such a climate, even epidemics

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of self-destruction are typically explained in the stock Romantic terms of a "poet's nature" or in the predictable "monotony generated by discourses on the relationship of art and madness."[60] The greatest problem with these discourses is that their predictability can make even the most simple distinctions seem eternal problems, not historical and cultural concerns. "Lyric" conventions become the grounds for dismissing poetry as unimportant, as though the conventions were not just the creation of poets and critics. The poet's estrangement from the common world comes to appear both inescapable, part of the "nature of things," and unique to poets, or at best unique to poets and madmen; lyricism, as the "purest" and most "eternal" poetry, is especially likely to be seen as continuous with madness.[61]

An approach to madness must leave the mainstream of objectifying psychology in order to avoid the perpetuation of this fallacy. Once the critic tries to find an orientation "as a person in the other's scheme of things," instead of only seeing "the other as an object in one's own mind," the facile connection between poetry and madness comes into question. And this connection is often behind the call of lyric separation, the desire for careless isolation.[62] With a less objectifying orientation, the critic can recognize that "there are other people who are regarded as sane, whose minds are radically unsound, who may be equally dangerous to themselves and others whom society does not regard as psychotic and fit persons for a madhouse." If the lyric poet seems "mad," then, he only seems half-mad, or relatively mad, and that is what makes him so disturbing: the "more or less satisfactory solution" we all must find between our desire for revelation and our desire for concealment is never completely satisfactory, and we feel threatened by more genuine privacy and more genuine relationship. Each of our solutions has flaws. One might disguise too much, or expose too much, and suffer accordingly the overly complex punishments of psychological repression or the overly simplistic punishments of external repression.

To make its own solutions appear less flawed—and therefore more authoritative—the mainstream of twentieth-century literary criticism has often fallen back on a highly restricted concept of the lyric: smooth, pure, simple.[63] The concept has helped disconnect poets from the rest of the culture. In doing so, we absolve ourselves of anything that happens to them. Our culture is predisposed, in any case, to attribute "madness" to "internal" causes, biochemical or psychodynamic, in order to absolve itself of responsibility for those who "go mad"; the political and social influences are underplayed. The importance of existential

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phenomenology is that it recognizes that the concept of "madness" can often serve those who value authority as a mask placed over a more intensified awareness of external oppression. Certain "schizoid" personalities, like certain modern "lyric" poets, might only have as their "illness" this type of preoccupation with cultural authority: Bunting's Villon, for instance, is an important figure of the modern lyric poet, and he is forced to compose from his jail cell. Excessive pleas for "sanity" in poetry, meaning restriction, and a too facile connection between poetry and madness can hide a similar desire: the will to make this relation to authority appear less authentic and therefore less threatening. The valuation of the poem-as-poem, form as an end in itself, the lyric as a pure and simple outpouring, the lyric as the "essence" of the poetic, "inspired" madness—all are versions of this will.[64]

The fragment of Zukofsky's demonstrates a distinctly modern relation between poetic authenticity and conventionality, one shown to some extent by writers like Olson, Creeley, and Bunting. The deep need that made Zukofsky's poetry necessary found fulfillment through its paradoxical approach to the lyric tradition. Considering poetry a sort of mathematical function, with speech as a lower limit and music as an upper limit, he struggled to find his relation to both the speech that surrounded him and the most highly conventionalized idea of poetry as song—and he found, in the process, an authentic relation to his own gift. He developed a self-consciousness about the lyric conventions and all their implications, and used them against themselves, to resist his culture's tendency to estrange poets; ironically, the conventions helped Zukofsky to discover care for the common world, a personal commitment to the writing of a poem that lasted almost fifty years, and political affiliation. The ironies that connect all these levels of meaning, from the most symbolic to the most material, remain so complicated, so self-conscious, that the poem's voice is, even now, the opposite of a generic poetic voice; it remains Zukofsky's own voice, even when it echoes other voices and earlier poetry.

For Zukofsky, then, the echoes of Shakespeare's sonnets were one pragmatic way of concealing his private voice from the outside world, with all its repressions and with all its institutions that would further estrange poetry from common labor. The echoes were part of an accent adopted as a way of going underground, or a way of surviving in a hostile foreign country. Even most literary journals and critical studies throughout Zukofsky's career were foreign to his poetics, if not directly hostile. And his poetry has finally managed to survive them, without

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sacrificing either its extreme privacy or its political resistance. The echoes were also a way of concealing from himself, to some extent, the precise internal "territory" he was revealing. The revelation could therefore be more than pretended or theatrical.

Above all, Zukofsky's self-conscious relation to the lyric tradition, in all its conventions, was a way of remaining authentic while writing seriously. Unlike Auden's Prospero, and unlike Auden himself, Zukofsky avoided creating an absolute choice between his care for the common world and his gift. Instead, he began at the point where Caliban's monologue leaves off: "the sounded note is the restored relation." Lamenting, Auden's Prospero prepared to leave the island for Milan; Zukofsky's poetry manages to bring together the island and Milan, his deep need for lyricism and his Brooklyn.

[1] See Humphrey Carpenter, *W. H. Auden: A Biography* (Boston: Houghton, 1981). esp. p. 306.

[2] W. H. Auden, *The Sea and the Mirror* in his *Selected Poems,* ed. Edward Mendelson (New York: Random House, 1979), p. 132.

[3] Auden, *The Sea and the Mirror,* p. 135.

[4] Stephen Spender, *World within World* (London: Reader's Union, 1953), esp. p. 247.

[5] Carpenter, *W. H. Auden,* pp. 233–40.

[6] Spender, *World within World,* p. 256.

[7] *Ibid.,* pp. 297–301.

[8] Carpenter, *W. H. Auden,* esp. pp. 281–311.

[9] Joseph Warren Beach, *The Making of the Auden Canon* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1957), p. 248.

[10] *Ibid.,* esp. pp. 250–54.

[11] See esp. Carpenter, *W. H. Auden,* pp. 283–307.

[12] Beach, *The Making of the Auden Canon,* p. 252.

[13] Cf. Spender, *World within World,* p. 299.

[14] This statement appears in a letter Auden wrote to a friend and is quoted by Carpenter, *W. H. Auden,* p. 316.

[15] Carpenter makes much of this approach, *ibid.,* esp. p. 325.

[16] *Ibid.,* p. 311.

[17] Auden, *The Sea and the Mirror,* p. 135.

[18] *Ibid.,* p. 134.

[19] *Ibid.,* p. 129.

[20] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death,* trans. Walter Lowrie (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1941), p. 23.

[21] Auden, *The Sea and the Mirror,* p. 134.

[22] *Ibid.,* p. 130.

[23] W. H. Auden, "Introduction" to *Kierkegaard* (London: Cassell, 1955), p. 2; cf. Kierkegaard's "Of the Difference between a Genius and an Apostle," trans. Alexander Dru (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1962), esp. pp. 120–24.

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"Genius has only an immanent teleology; the apostle is absolutely, paradoxically, teleologically placed."

[24] Auden, *The Sea and the Mirror,* p. 134.

[25] *Ibid.,* p. 134; cf. Beach, *The Making of the Auden Canon,* p. 239; "For the acute consciousness of his separation from others distinguishes the superior man from those whose notions of love and companionship are not sufficiently elevated to make them aware of their essential loneliness." Beach's commentary owes much at this point to Randall Jarrell's criticism of Auden, as Beach himself notes.

[26] Auden, *The Sea and the Mirror,* p. 135.

[27] *Ibid.,* p. 172.

[28] Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death,* p. 19.

[29] Auden, *The Sea and the Mirror,* p. 134.

[30] Jean Paul Sartre, "Mallarmé: The Poetry of Suicide," in Sartre's *Between Existentialism and Marxism,* trans. John Mathews (New York: Pantheon, 1974), p. 177.

[31] *Ibid.,* p. 178.

[32] Auden, "Introduction" to *Kierkegaard,* pp. 3–4.

[33] Sartre, "Mallarmé," p. 178.

[34] Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death,* p. 19.

[35] For a description of Mortmere, see Christopher Isherwood's *Lions and Shadows* (London: Hogarth, 1938), esp. pp. 62–70.

[36] See Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony,* trans. Lee Capel (New York: Harper, 1965), esp. pp. 289–342.

[37] W. H. Auden, "Balaam and His Ass," reprinted in Auden's *The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays* (New York: Random House, 1968), pp. 107–42.

[38] Auden, "Balaam," p. 119.

[39] *Ibid.,* p. 118.

[40] Cecil Day Lewis, *The Lyric Impulse* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1965), p. 2.

[41] One can easily find many examples. For a representative older version, see Ernest Rhys's *Lyric Poetry* (London: Dent, 1913): "With Shelley we accept the transcendent idea of its powers, as moving toward the creative embodiment of a beauty, higher than nature itself, that adds to the ideal wealth of mankind. The lyric in this sense looks for a separate expression that is of a part with the symmetry of a crystal or an exquisitely formed flower," p. vi. For a more recent example, see W. R. Johnson, *The Idea of Lyric Modes in Ancient and Modern Poetry* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1982): "I regard this genre as immutable and universal. Its accidents may and always do show extraordinary variations as it unfolds in time, but its substance abides": a brief passage from Tertullian is "an emblem of this changing permanence," p. 2.

[42] Many of the crucial issues involving the relationship between an "author" and a text are raised in Michel Foucault's essay "What is an Author?" in his *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice,* trans. Donald Bouchard and Sherry Simon, ed. Donald Bouchard (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 113–38.

[43] Kierkegaard develops his distinction between mastered and unmastered irony in *The Concept of Irony,* esp. p. 317. New Criticism typically values unmastered irony.

[44] Paul de Man's "Lyric and Modernity" suggests that problems such as

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these might provide a test of modernity: "The less we understand a poet, the more he gets compulsively misinterpreted and oversimplified, made to say the opposite of what he actually said, the better the chances that he is truly modern, that is, different from what we—mistakenly—think we are ourselves": in *Forms of Lyric: Selected Papers from the English Institute,* ed. Reuben Brower (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 151–76.

[45] de Man considers the element of contradiction in the idea of a "modern lyric," given a tradition in which "lyric poetry is often seen not as an evolved but as an early and spontaneous form of language, in open contrast to more self-conscious and reflective, prosaic forms of literary discourse"; de Man, "Lyric and Modernity," pp. 152–54.

[46] Day Lewis, *The Lyric Impulse,* p. 21.

[47] Olson's "Projective Verse" essay is the work most likely to be treated as a "manifesto" for this "group" of poets; the inclusion of Bunting and Zukofsky here is especially meant to show the inappropriateness of this impulse to "group" writers around a central text.

[48] The etymology of "revolutionary" is important in this instance, as it shares a common Latin root with "involution," and thus carries some sense of "covering": the conventions can provide a type of covering that allows radically different poetry to overturn the tradition.

[49] "Liveforever" is an important and recurrent theme and phrase throughout *A,* especially important to the poetics of "A-12". See Louis Zukofsky, *A* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1978), p. 247.

[50] This concept of the Romantic sublime finds its most powerful expression in the fully sympathetic universe of *Paradise Lost*; Keats's revision of Miltonic poetry involves his struggle with this sublime universe, as his ambivalence toward it sets off an opposed and equally frightening attraction to the inanimate.

[51] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History,* trans. Adrian Collins (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1957), p. 22; see Nietzsche throughout on the critical historian, esp. *ibid.,* pp. 22–29.

[52] See Nietzsche, *ibid.,* on antiquarian history, esp. pp. 17–22.

[53] See Zukofsky, *A,* esp. pp. 39–42.

[54] See Robert Creeley's "Prefatory Note" to his *Collected Poems* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1982), pp. ix–x.

[55] See esp. Auden's "At the Grave of Henry James," in his *Selected Poems,* pp. 119–23.

[56] R. D. Laing, *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness* (London: Tavistock, 1969), p. 38.

[57] See esp. Frederic Jameson, *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, The Modernist as Fascist* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1979).

[58] Importantly, Mandelstam's persecution was based on an uncharacteristic, unconcealed poem; still, one cannot feel too sure that any particular poem altered, or could have altered, his fate.

[59] de Man provides a useful overview of this position and an important refutation of it.

[60] See Foucault, "The Father's 'No'," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice,* pp. 68–86.

[61] See esp. *ibid.,* p. 80.

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[62] For this "approach to madness," see Laing, *The Divided Self*, esp. pp. 23–28.

[63] As a recent exception, one must note Sharon Cameron's *Lyric Time: Dickinson and the Limits of Genre* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1979), especially in its recognition of the important question: "If seeming to defy the social world from which it is set apart, how is it coerced back into a relationship with that world?" (p. 23).

[64] This problem recurs to some degree whenever "lyric poetry" is assumed to stand for "poetry" in its pure and unadulterated form: even de Man performs a clever sleight of hand toward the end of his important essay by which "lyric poetry" disappears into "poetry" and "the lyric poet" into "the poet."

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The Waste Land: T. S. Eliot's and Ezra Pound's Collaboration on Hysteria

Winner of the 1988 TCL *Prize in Literary Criticism*

Wayne Koestenbaum

It is a curious fact of intellectual history that psychoanalysis was born as a collaboration between two men—Josef Breuer's and Sigmund Freud's *Studies on Hysteria* (1895). The "talking cure" itself grew out of a collaborative relation between Josef Breuer and his patient, Anna O.; and so Freud's and Breuer's partnership echoes the psychoanalytic collaboration between doctor and hysteric. Another portrait of hysteria over which two men brooded came forth in England in 1921–22, *The Waste Land*; its manuscript reveals that this supposedly impersonal icon of New Criticism has connections with Eliot's own mental breakdown, and that Ezra Pound's work on the poem transformed it from a "sprawling chaos" into something hard and powerfully disjunctive.[1]

Despite its sibylline discontinuities, *The Waste Land* was taken up as a monument of male modernist propaganda. Joyce wrote that it "ended the idea of poetry for ladies," and Pound commented that "Eliot's *Waste Land* is I think the justification of the 'movement,' of our modern experiment, since 1900."[2] Critics have often sought a male protagonist in the poem, and identified this quest figure with the male reader. In 1934, I. A. Richards described the obstacles this quester faces: "Even the most careful and responsive reader must reread and do hard work before the poem forms itself clearly and unambiguously in his mind. . . . And it is easy to fail in this undertaking."[3] Delmore Schwartz, in 1945,

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described Eliot's protagonist—and Eliot himself—as an "international hero," and D. C. Fowler, in 1953, called the poem's protagonist "both hero and king."[4] The poem's heroic readers, whom John Crowe Ransom, in 1966, called "those sturdy people who studied *The Waste Land,*" formed a brotherhood of critics who, in Ransom's words, "were tough-minded as they were competent, and when they succeeded they were elated like professional sportsmen over their triumphs."[5]

This sportsman-reader of Eliot's heroic poem has until recently obscured the affinities between the discourse of high male modernism and the discourse of hysteria. Hysteria's ruptures, discontinuities, and absences are similar to the "pre-Oedipal semiotic babble"[6] which Julia Kristeva sees as characteristic of experimental literature. If "for at least a century, the literary avant-garde . . . has been introducing ruptures, blank spaces, and holes into language," and if "the moment of rupture and negativity" is feminine, then Eliot's semiotic *Waste Land* has pronounced affiliations with the discourse of the female hysteric.[7]

Hysteria is a disturbance in language; and the very word hysteria has marked it as an affliction of women.[8] In Breuer's and Freud's *Studies on Hysteria,* where the hysterics are all women, female speech is both the illness and the cure: (disordered) talking is the sickness cured by talking. Anna O.'s illness consisted in

> a deep-going functional disorganization of speech. It first became noticeable that she was at a loss to find words. . . . Later she lost her command of grammar and syntax; she no longer conjugated verbs, and eventually she used only infinitives, for the most part incorrectly formed from weak past participles; and she omitted both the definite and indefinite article. In the process of time she became almost completely deprived of words. She put them together laboriously out of four or five languages and became almost unintelligible. . . . At times when she was at her best and most free, she talked French and Italian.[9]

Hysterical discontinuities of speech like Anna O.'s, however, offer openings for analytic entrances; the hysteric's riddles cry out for a collaborator's interpretation. Freud considered the female hysteric as an oracle to be shared with his male collaborator and his male reader, for he refers to a patient as "our oracle" (*SH,* p. 276).[10] By interpreting this enigma, Freud becomes a midwife who helps draw sense out of hysteria's "narrow cleft":

> The whole spatially-extended mass of psychogenic material is in this way drawn through a narrow cleft and thus arrives in consciousness cut up, at it were, into pieces or strips. It is the

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> psychoanalyst's business to put these together once more into the organization which he presumes to have existed. (*SH*, p. 291)

If the analyst is a midwife, then the hysteric is a woman in symbolic labor, like Anna O., whose analysis terminated in a hysterical pregnancy. However, when Freud describes the talking cure as a collaboration, he refers to the hysteric as a "he":

> By explaining things to [the patient] . . . by giving *him* information about the marvellous world of psychical processes into which we ourselves only gained insight by such analyses, we make *him himself* into a *collaborator,* induce *him* to regard *himself* with the objective interest of an investigator. . . . (*SH*, p. 282. Emphasis mine.)

Freud's hysterics were, in fact, women, but in order to imagine them as comrades in scientific inquiry, he must think of them as men. By collaborating with his female hysterics, Freud transforms them into male co-investigators; by helping the hysteric talk away her "disturbances of speech," he translates her symptoms of female distress back into masculine language.

Because the manuscript of *The Waste Land* resembles hysterical discourse—a "private theater" of fantasy like Anna O.'s, a female language which Pound, like a psychoanalyst, appropriated and renovated—I will use Breuer's and Freud's collaboration on female hysteria as a paradigm for Pound's and Eliot's collaboration. The collaborative renewal of the poem involves a male relation toward hysterical speech: Pound and Eliot can bond as men because they perceive the discontinuous text to be female. The manuscript, like Vivien, Eliot's "mad" wife, is a female hysteric with whom Pound and Eliot form a triangle. I will argue that the manuscript of *The Waste Land* embodied a desire for Pound's curative arrival; Eliot's act of handing over his "chaotic" poem to another man exists as a gesture intrinsic to the poem, and prior to his actually giving it to Pound.

In the years preceding *The Waste Land,* Eliot was preoccupied with nerves—his own and his wife's; together, they suffered from vague and variously diagnosed emotional and somatic disorders.[11] The progression of his nervousness led to therapeutic retreats to Margate and to Lausanne in 1921, and to the composition of *The Waste Land*: it is now widely understood that Eliot's own mental breakdown was a condition of the poem's composition. Hysteria is a legitimate term for Eliot's affliction; male hysteria—sanctioned as "shell shock" during World War I—certainly existed.[12] Eliot indicates his familiarity with the diagnosis of hysteria in "Sweeney Erect," in which an "epileptic on the bed / Curves

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backward, clutching at her sides"; Eliot wryly observes, "hysteria / Might easily be misunderstood."[13]

Eliot's most explicit confrontation with hysteria, however, is his prose poem, "Hysteria."[14] Confronting the disease in a woman, Eliot finds it in himself, for the female hysteric is only uncertainly external to the male "I" who observes her: "As she laughed I was aware of becoming involved in her laughter and being part of it. . . ." Lost "in the dark caverns of her throat," he has entered her language, her mouth, a vagina dentata with "unseen muscles" and a row of teeth like "accidental stars." To separate himself from the hysteric, Eliot invokes an "elderly waiter"—a paternal spirit guide, like Pound. But even the waiter is not safe from hysteria: hands "trembling," he gives voice to Eliot's own paralysis in a stutter, like the speech tics of Freud's patient, Frau Emmy von N. (*SH,* pp. 48–105). The waiter repeats, "If the lady and gentleman wish to take their tea in the garden. . . ." The waiter is no help, and Eliot must confront hysteria alone: "I decided that if the shaking of her breasts could be stopped, some of the fragments of the afternoon might be collected, and I concentrated my attention with careful subtlety to that end." Eliot—overcareful, anxious, and hysterical—will fail; he cannot cure hysteria without another man's collaboration. The shaking breasts are the subject he wishes to capture in his poem, and the symbol of his emotional state as he attempts to write that poem. Any movement Eliot makes, single-handedly, toward cohesion, will be tainted by the sympathetic vibrations that the shaking breasts set off in his stuttering language.

Although Eliot had this long poem on his mind as early as 1919,[15] he found himself, like Anna O., "almost completely deprived of words." Feeling that he had "dried up completely," he wrote poems in French to outwit his paralysis—a sort of hysterical conversion from one tongue to another, like Anna O. speaking English because she was suddenly unable to speak her native German (*L,* p. 80). Conrad Aiken related that although every evening Eliot "went home to his flat hoping that he could start writing again . . . night after night the hope proved illusory: the sharpened pencil lay unused by the untouched sheet of paper."[16] In 1918, Eliot's doctor ordered him not to write any prose for six months; at Margate, the work he did on *The Waste Land* was against the advice of his doctor, who, according to Eliot, ordered him "to go away at once . . . not exert my mind at all and follow his strict rules for every hour of the day."[17] Prohibition against fatiguing brain-work was the cure that women writers like Alice James, Virginia Woolf, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman endured: the doctors treated Eliot, too, like a female hysteric.

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Eliot's emotional paralysis, in fact, corresponds to the female hysteric's literal paralysis: in 1918, he wrote that "the experiences I have been through have been paralyzing" (*F,* p. xv). In addition, he complained of "an aboulie and emotional derangement which has been a lifelong affliction" (*F,* p. xxii): abulia was a hysterical symptom which Freud's patient, Emmy von N., exhibited. Because the hysteric, in her classic formulation, is invariably female, there is something feminine about Eliot's paralyzed and barren condition as he was contemplating and composing *The Waste Land.* Using the discourse of female hysteria, Eliot invoked the aid of a male analyst.

Conrad Aiken, in fact, believed that an "intrusion" by a psychiatrist catalyzed the composition of *The Waste Land.* A friend of Aiken asked a psychiatrist about Eliot's writing block, and the psychiatrist pronounced that Eliot "thinks he's God." Aiken wrote: "When I told Eliot . . . he was literally speechless with rage. The *intrusion,* quite simply, was one that was intolerable."[18] Yet Aiken believed that this strong male figure's "intrusion"—which intensified Eliot's hysterical speechlessness—fertilized his imagination and freed him to write *The Waste Land.* At Lausanne, under the care of Dr. Vittoz, Eliot enjoyed further intrusions, for this doctor performed a laying-on-of-hands similar to the "pressure technique" Freud describes in *Studies on Hysteria*; Freud pressed his hand to the patient's forehead and commanded her to remember what she had repressed.[19] Under the hand of Vittoz, Eliot became as oracular as that patient who, under Freud's hand, fell into a trance and saw "curious signs looking rather like Sanskrit" (*SH,* p. 277). Eliot, too, saw curious Sanskrit signs—*Da, Datta, Dayadhvam,* and *Shantih*; while under Vittoz' care, Eliot wrote the body of "What the Thunder Said," lines he considered the best in the poem (*F,* p. 129). He was able to compose these lines, paradoxically, *because* of his illness, for, in his essay on Pascal, he wrote that "it is a commonplace that some forms of illness are extremely favorable, not only to religious illumination, but to artistic and literary composition."[20] Eliot's state of grace-through-illness resembles Anna O.'s *condition seconde,* her auto-hypnotic *absence,* "which may well be likened to a dream in view of its wealth of imaginative products and hallucinations, its large gaps of memory and the lack of inhibition and control in its associations" (*SH,* p. 45). Eliot believed that illness could inspire: he was fond of Housman's comment, "I have seldom written poetry unless I was rather out of health," and, in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism,* he wrote that "ill-health, debility, or anaemia, may . . . produce an efflux of poetry in a way approaching the condition of automatic writing."[21] For

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Eliot, poetic composition was a cathartic birth, like Anna O.'s hysterical childbirth, or the "talking cure" itself: the poet, Eliot believed, "is going to all that trouble, not to communicate with anyone, but to gain relief from acute discomfort," for he "is oppressed by a burden which he must bring to birth in order to bring relief."[22]

Hysteria, in Eliot's prose poem, was a pathology of femininity with which he felt an uneasy sympathy. T. S. and Vivien Eliot spent their marriage sharing this pathology; in 1919, for example, while Vivien complained of migraine, swollen face, tiredness, and depression, Eliot was depressed, bedridden, and exhausted (*L,* p. 94). Vivien's mother feared that her daughter had inherited "moral insanity," one feature of which was her "irregular and over-frequent menstrual cycle"; on the other hand, a doctor told Eliot, "Mr. Eliot, you have the thinnest blood I've ever tested" (*L,* pp. 62–66). Thin-blooded Eliot obliquely associated Vivien's "over-frequent" bleeding with his own less frequent poetry: when Aiken praised Eliot's 1925 *Poems,* he responded "with a printed page torn out of *The Midwives' Gazette,* on which he had underlined in ink" a description of vaginal discharge: "*Blood—mucous—shreds of mucous—puruluent offensive discharge.*"[23] The strange conjunction of Vivien's blood, Eliot's use of *The Midwives' Gazette* to characterize his own poetry, his statement that the poet is "oppressed by a burden which he must bring to birth," and Pound's role as midwife of *The Waste Land,* reveal that women, blood, and birth were central to Eliot's poetry, and imply that Vivien embodied the hysteria that *The Waste Land* both suffers and portrays.

Eliot's alliance with Vivien was more than symbolic: she was part of his work. He asked her to accompany him to Margate, where she wrote letters for him; as he worked on *The Waste Land,* "her approval was his prime consideration" (*L,* p. 114). In therapy at Lausanne, his aim was to get well enough to "be able to take some of the burden off Vivien who had had to do so much of the 'thinking' for him in the past" (*L,* p. 150). She found *The Waste Land*'s publication painful, since the poem was so tied to her. "As to Tom's *mind,* I am his mind," she wrote (*L,* pp. 129, 150). Mysteriously confined to an asylum in 1938, she died, still confined, in 1947. It is telling that the two midwives of Eliot's poem of hysteria spent long years in asylums—Vivien at Northumberland House, Pound at St. Elizabeths. Eliot turned his hysteria into an institution, *The Waste Land,* while Vivien suffered a more literal institutionalization.

The most conspicuous midwife of *The Waste Land* was Ezra Pound, who had a decisive effect on Eliot's life and work. In 1915, Pound

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stimulated him to begin writing after a lapse of three years, and encouraged him to settle in England and marry Vivien (*L*, p. 150). In personal as well as in poetic matters, Eliot depended on Pound's blunt mediation and superior strength. Two days after Eliot's marriage, Pound wrote to Eliot's father: "Your son asks me to write this letter, I think he expects me to send you some sort of apologia for the literary life in particular."[24] Eliot's literary life and conjugal life were equally unacceptable to his father, who had not been told of the marriage to Vivien. Indeed, by writing to Eliot's father without speaking of Vivien or of the wedding, Pound poses as a suitor for Eliot's hand in literary marriage, as Eliot embarks on a life led under Pound's wing.

Pound, in fact, was the only person in whom Eliot confided his marital problems (*L*, p. 97).[25] Such confidences facilitated the men's exchange of poetic powers. In an essay on Wordsworth and Coleridge, Eliot describes how male poets influence each other through the mediation of a shared woman:

> This reciprocal influence [of Wordsworth and Coleridge] would hardly have been possible to such a degree without another influence which held the two men together, and affected both of them more deeply than either knew, the influence of a great woman. No woman has ever played so important a part in the lives of two poets at once—I mean their poetic lives—as did Dorothy Wordsworth.[26]

By qualifying "the lives of two poets" with an aside—"I mean their poetic lives"—Eliot indicates that the distinction between life and poetry was not, for him, absolute, and that the woman whom two poets share is a body analogous to the body of poetic work they forge together. Writing to Pound in 1915, Eliot enclosed two poems about formidable women: "Portrait of a Lady," and the still unpublished "Suppressed Complex," about a woman in bed—either asleep or hysterically paralyzed.[27] Discussing "Portrait of a Lady," Eliot makes no distinction between the poem—which he calls the Lady—and the lady who inspired the poem. If a poem about a lady, and a lady herself, were the same, then when Eliot asks Pound to burn "Suppressed Complex" after reading it, he is asking Pound to burn the woman that the poem represents. Eliot sends Pound poems about hysterical or problematic femininity because he can depend on Pound to exorcise the male poet's own identification with the hysterical woman he purports merely to describe.

Given Pound's perceived power over hysteria, it is not surprising that Vivien Eliot should turn to him for advice, and as a go-between in

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her troubled relations with her husband. In letters, she begs Pound to urge Eliot to rescue her from The Stanboroughs, a hydrotherapy institution, and thanks Pound for his medical attentions; she confesses to Pound her powers as a medium, her ability to fall into trances.[28] Pound's attentions to Vivien's hysteria and to *The Waste Land*'s hysteria are related editorial events, for when Eliot went to Lausanne to be treated by Vittoz, he left his wife in Pound's care—along with, the evidence suggests, the manuscript of *The Waste Land*.[29] Eliot disburdened himself of two hysterical presences—the poem and the wife; he saw Pound as the one who could make both right.

Pound's and Eliot's homosocial literary relations were shadowed by a sometimes disguised misogyny—specifically, a dislike of women writers.[30] In a letter of 1915, Eliot comments disparagingly on how women have taken over literature; in a letter of 1917, he refers to a literary gathering marred by the presence of too many women, and suggests that the men meet separately. Contemporary life, he complains, has become too feminine. In another letter of 1917, he mocks Edith Sitwell (finding the word "shit" in her name), and remarks on the scarcity of gifted women.[31] But a more vituperative misogyny is unleashed in John Quinn's letters to Ezra Pound. John Quinn, a lawyer and agent, helped mastermind the practical and financial aspects of Eliot's literary career; in recognition of those efforts, Eliot gave Quinn the original manuscript of *The Waste Land* after the poem had been published. Though no *miglior fabbro,* Quinn, like Pound, was a man with whom Eliot felt compelled to share his manuscript. Quinn, Pound, and Eliot were close friends; Pound, in fact, introduced Quinn to Eliot. In Quinn's letters to Pound, misogyny is so much the rule, and not the exception, that these attitudes probably served as common ground for the three friends. Eliot's recourse to the phrase "purulent offensive discharge"—the clipping from *The Midwives' Gazette* which Eliot sent Aiken—shares a motive with Quinn's fulminations to Pound about the two women who edited the *Little Review*:

> Without being personal, I think of female literary excrement; washy urinacious menstruations; with the mental stink but without the physical hardihood of the natural skunk . . . a feeling of stale urine exuded in the place of the cream of the jest.
>
> Putrid ignorance, imbecile brazenness, banal pretense—that make the sight of a squatting bitch dachshund pouring a sheet of urine into a ditch a poetic, if not a pitiful, sight.
>
> These people seem to sweat urine and probably urinate sweat.

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> I don't mind the aberrations of a woman who has some openness and elasticity of mind . . . but, by God! I don't like the thought of women who seem to exude as well as bathe in piss, if not drink it, or each other's.[32]

These are the sentiments about literary women that distinguish the man whom Eliot gave, in gratitude, his manuscript of *The Waste Land*. Did Eliot and Pound share these sentiments, or merely tolerate them in Quinn? Describing female literary activity as "excrement," and obsessively focusing on a woman's urine, strengthens Quinn's male bond to Pound, and, possibly, to Eliot: the conviction that a woman's urine, excrement, or blood are substances connected to her literary products underlies the omitted Fresca passages from "The Fire Sermon": Quinn's execrations tap the same prejudices as Eliot's description of Fresca's "good old hearty female stench," her reading of *Clarissa* while she produces her "needful stool," or even the typist's "dirty camisoles and stays." Quinn expresses a lascivious hatred that, in muted form, structures Eliot's desire to have a second man launder and bless his *Waste Land*.

Pound and Eliot indulged together in a bawdiness like their friend Quinn's. Eliot wrote (still unpublished) poems with references to penises and sphincters—parts of an epic, "King Bolo and His Great Black Queen"—and incorporated the verses into his letters to Pound (*L*, p. 52). Pound wrote counterparts to Eliot's "King Bolo" verses: in the letter to Eliot in which Pound suggests revisions to *The Waste Land*, Pound includes a series of comic verses, describing himself as midwife, and Eliot as mother, of *The Waste Land*. Unfortunately, Paige expurgated the poem in his *Selected Letters of Ezra Pound*.[33] I will quote the entire poem; the lines that Paige omitted, until now unpublished, I enclose in brackets.

SAGE HOMME

These are the Poems of Eliot
By the Uranian Muse begot;
A Man their Mother was,
A Muse their sire.

How did the printed Infancies result
From Nuptials thus doubly difficult?

If you must needs enquire
Know diligent Reader

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That on each Occasion
Ezra performed the caesarean Operation.

E.P.

////////////////

Cauls and grave clothes he brings,
Fortune's outrageous stings,
About which odour clings,
    Of putrifaction,
Bleichstein's dank rotting clothes
Affect the dainty nose,
He speaks of common woes
    Deploring action.

He writes of A.B.C.s.
And flaxseed poultices,
Observing fate's hard decrees
    Sans satisfaction;
Breeding of animals,
Humans and cannibals,
But above all else of smells
    Without attraction

Vates cum fistula
E.P.

[E.P. hopeless and unhelped

Enthroned in The marmorean skies
His verse omits realities,
Angelic hands with mother of pearl
Retouch the strapping servant girl,

The barman is to blinded him
Silenus bubling at the brim, (or burbling)
The glasses turn to chalices
Is his fumbling analysis
And holy hosts of hellenists
Have numbed and honied his cervic cysts,
Despite his hebrew eulogists.

Balls and balls and balls again
Can not touch his fellow men.
His foaming and abundant cream
Has coated his world. The coat of a dream;
Or say that the upjut of his sperm
Has rendered his senses pachyderm.

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Grudge not the oyster his stiff saliva
Envy not the diligent diver. et in aeternitate]

The first verses revealed that Pound was the midwife of *The Waste Land,* and that Eliot was the mother, but left ambiguous how Eliot had been impregnated. Impregnation depends on sperm that the expurgated verses supply: "His foaming and abundant cream / Has coated his world." Receptive Eliot takes in Pound's sperm, for E.P., the "blinded him" who, merely masturbatory, cannot "touch his fellow men," is the source of this upjutting "cream." Pound, Eliot's male muse, is the Sire of *The Waste Land.*

Pound's talk of sperm here is not an isolated indulgence. Six months earlier, in June 1921, in a postcript to Remy de Gourmont's *The Natural Philosophy of Love,*[34] which Pound had translated, he expatiates on the relation between creativity and sperm, and describes sperm as a shaping force not unlike Coleridge's "esemplastic power." Pound writes: "the brain itself, is, in origin and development, only a sort of great clot of genital fluid held in suspense or reserve," and "creative thought is an act like fecundation, like the male cast of the human seed." Pound asserts that the male has a privileged power to "exteriorize" forms—to create works of art: man is master of "the new upjut, the new bathing of the cerebral tissues in . . . *la mousse* of the life sap." The fact that "the mind is an up-jut of sperm" has a particular bearing on the situation of a literary man in London in the 1920s, for Pound likens the phallus "charging, head-on," into "female chaos," to the frustration of "driving any new idea into the great passive vulva of London." Trying to create a revolution in poetry was a phallic act.

Pound's genital essentialism, in the context of his siring of Eliot's poem, and his self-description as source of "foaming and abundant cream," implies a scene of homosexual intercourse between Pound and Eliot. Such a scene clarifies the nature of Eliot's "Uranian muse": the phrase not only refers to Milton's muse, but to the Uranian poets, avowedly homosexual, of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[35] Rendered "hopeless and unhelped" by the spectacle of Eliot's magnificent (and now manly) *Waste Land,* Pound is "wracked by the seven jealousies," and condemns his own verse as effeminate, decadent "nacre" and "objets d'art": he confesses to Eliot, "I go into nacre and objets d'art."[36] Pound's reference to "foaming and abundant cream" strives to be merely bawdy; so does John Quinn's "feeling of stale urine exuded in the place of the cream of the jest." But dirty jokes supported more unsettling complicities. Eliot took Pound's comic verses

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seriously enough to suggest that they be published in italics at the beginning of *The Waste Land*—a gesture which would have revealed to all readers that the poem was a collaboration. The substance of Pound's dirty joke is that Eliot has been impregnated by Pound. Fantasies of male maternity buttress male modernism: Pound dates this letter 24 *Saturnus, An 1,* signifying that 1921, the year of *Ulysses*' publication, is the Year One of Modernism, and that Joyce's epic gave birth, as it were, to a new world. In the same letter, Pound calls Eliot a "bitch," and refers, in the comic verse, to "his cervic cysts." In another 1921 letter to Eliot, Pound writes that "Yeats has given birth to a son."[37] Pound wished to believe that Joyce, Eliot, and Yeats had each given birth in 1921.

That Eliot's poem-child came from (metaphorical) homosexual intercourse with Pound is underscored by the phrase, "Vates cum fistula," in Pound's comic verse. *Vates cum fistula* means poet with reed-pipe; it also means poet (or seer) with an ulcer in his bowels. The *OED* cites: "Fostering continually this fretting Fistula within the Bowels of the Christian Commonweal." Earlier in the "obstetric" letter of December 1921, Pound wrote, "Some day I shall lose my temper, lie like a shit-arse and say 'Art shd. embellish the umbelicus." Paige, in his edition of the letters, omitted the phrase "shit-arse." "Shit-arse," more than jest, reinforces the sense that the male poet has given birth, and that the "umbelicus" of the male poet is in his "arse," site of "his cervic cysts." If "hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences"—Freud's and Breuer's celebrated sentence—then *The Waste Land* suffers from Eliot's reminiscences of Jean Verdenal, a medical student with literary interests whom Eliot befriended in Paris before the war, and who died in 1915, one month before Eliot's precipitous marriage to Vivien.[38] There is a link between *The Waste Land*'s homosexual conception (Pound's sperm, Eliot's "arse") and the poem's mourning for a dead male beloved. The homosexual "nuptials" of Eliot and Pound replicate the poem's homosexual subtext, but Pound's revisions bury that subtext, for he urges Eliot to omit "The Death of Saint Narcissus," "Song for the Opherion," "Exequy," and "Dirge"—poems which are "elucidative" of Eliot's mourning for Verdenal.[39] Eliot's arguably sexual interest in Verdenal, repressed from the poem, leaves behind hysterical discontinuities.

After Eliot revised the poem, Pound made final suggestions. Paige published Pound's letter, but omitted a telling passage:

> Aristophanes probably depressing, and the native negro phoque melodies of Dixee more calculated to lift the ball-encumbered

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> phallus of man to the proper 8.30, 9.30 or even ten thirty level now counted as the crowning and alarse too often katachrestical summit of human achievement.
>
> I enclose further tracings of an inscription discovered recently in the buildings (?) outworks of the city hall jo-house at Charleston S.C.
>
> May your erection never grow less. I had intended to speak to you seriously on the subject, but you seemed so mountany gay while here in the midst of Paris that the matter slipped my foreskin.[40]

In Paris, what evidence did Pound witness of Eliot being "mountany gay"? Given Pound's yoking of sperm and creativity, the "erection" for which Pound congratulates Eliot is both genital and literary: with Pound's help on *The Waste Land,* Eliot regained sexual potency and literary power. Eliot admitted that he "placed before . . . [Pound] in Paris the manuscript of a scrawling, chaotic poem";[41] in his hesitation to claim those discontinuities as signs of power, he resembles Prufrock, unerect, indecisive, unable to come to the point. Pound treats the manuscript of *The Waste Land* as if it were an effeminate Prufrock he wishes to rouse: he "cures" the poem of its hysteria by suggesting that central representations of the feminine be expunged—thereby masculinizing the poem's core—and by urging Eliot to make his language less indecisive. Indeed, Pound's attitude toward *The Waste Land*'s neurasthenia resembled his attitude toward Eliot's sexual neurasthenia: "May your erection never grow less." In my discussion of the changes Pound suggested, I will put aside judgments of literary quality. Focusing merely on Pound's editorial genius—the fact that the passages he cut perhaps deserved to be cut—blinds us to other motives for his excisions. I would like now to suggest a different reading of Pound's Caesarean performance.

Because Pound sought to establish Eliot's primacy in literary history with *The Waste Land,* he disapproved of beginning the poem with an epigraph from Joseph Conrad, a living writer. In the "obstetric" letter, Pound wrote to Eliot: "I doubt if Conrad is weighty enough to stand the citation." I suspect that Pound objected not merely to Conrad's lack of eminence, but to the content of the epigraph: a passage from *Heart of Darkness*—"The horror! the horror!"—it records a man's fear of the dark continent. Beginning the poem with a cry of emasculated terror would not help keep Eliot erect. However, in this letter to Eliot, Pound echoes the very language of horror he disliked in the epigraph: "(It

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also, to your horror probably, reads aloud very well. Mouthing out his OOOOOOze.)" Pound uses words that reflect *The Waste Land*'s fear of things that gape: he mentions "the body of the poem," and describes his "Sage Homme" verses as a "bloody impertinence," which should be placed "somewhere where they would be decently hidden and swamped by the bulk of the accompanying matter." Pound's language of mouths, horror, blood, and swamps echoes Eliot's characterization of his own poems as a woman's "purulent offensive discharge."

Pound separated Eliot's verse from female discharge by critiquing Eliot's moments of identification with feminine behavior. Pound questioned Eliot's lines—" 'You gave me hyacinths first a year ago; / 'They called me the hyacinth girl' " (*F*, p. 7)—with the marginal annotation, "Marianne," which, according to Richard Ellman, refers to that woman of letters, Marianne Moore.[42] Did Pound object to these lines because Eliot, by using quotation, was adopting the style of Marianne Moore, a woman writer? Or, recognizing that "hyacinth" signified homosexuality, did Pound dislike the passage because Eliot was impersonating a hyacinth girl? Valerie Eliot, in a footnote to the facsimile, asserts that by "Marianne," Pound meant Tennyson's Mariana. Perhaps Pound disapproved of Eliot's identification with Mariana, hardly a masculine, decisive figure; indeed, she was a pining hysteric and an emblem of the Victorian poetry which, by Pound's modernist credo, signified effeteness. Pound also questions the lines–

> "My nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad. Stay with me.
> "Speak to me. Why do you never speak? Speak.
> "What are you thinking of? What thinking? ~~Think~~ What?
> "I never know what you are thinking. Think."

—with the annotation, "photography," and disputes the line—"Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?"—with the same criticism, "photo" (*F*, pp. 11, 13). Pound faulted the lines for being photographic—cheaply realistic, insufficiently wrought by artistic muscle–and for the scene which was being photographed: the lines portray Eliot as neurasthenic, silent, unable to satisfy his wife, and portray Vivien as hysterically adamant. "Is there nothing in your head?" is a photograph of Eliot as absence, the gaping "horror" of the canceled epigraph; Pound did not want Eliot to admit affinities with Prufrock. Vivien, the camera's subject, commented that these lines were "WONDERFUL," and added a further photographic line which Eliot kept: "What you get married for if you dont want to have children." Vivien's line concerns a woman's refusal to comply with a marriage's demands, but this passage's

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core is not the woman's refusal to have children, but the man's sexual failure.

Another portrait of a lady that Pound blotted out was the Fresca section in "The Fire Sermon." In the typescript, Pound dismissed the whole passage with the comment—"Rhyme drags it out to diffuseness"—but only crossed out the four lines which portrayed Fresca as a poet:

> From such chaotic misch-masch potpourri
> What are we to expect but poetry?
> When restless nights distract her brain from sleep
> She may as well write poetry, as count sheep.
> (*F*, p. 41)

Eliot had described his own poem as "chaotic"; Pound called it a "masterpiece."[43] Pound's role as collaborator and editor is to separate Eliot's chaotic *Waste Land* from Fresca's chaotic potpourri, Eliot's masterpiece from Fresca's hysteric fits, and Eliot's Uranian Muse from Fresca's forays into homosexual and lesbian writers: "Fresca was baptised in a soapy sea / Of Symonds—Walter Pater—Vernon Lee." Pound's revisions intend to save Eliot from seeming like Symonds. By crossing out Fresca, Pound suggests that Eliot begin "The Fire Sermon" with the "I": "Musing upon the king my brother's wreck / And on the king my father's death before him." Pound only tolerated the tableau of the dead king and the wrecked brother because their dismemberment and ruin did not infect Eliot's language with symptoms of decline.

Pound particularly objected to syntactic inversion; and syntactic inversion, in turn, suggests sexual inversion. "Inversion" was one of the fin de siècle's words for "homosexual"; the word was most notoriously circulated by John Addington Symonds' and Havelock Ellis' *Sexual Inversion*. In a letter to Eliot, Pound wrote, "I should leave it as it is, and NOT invert," and in the manuscript, he commented, "inversions not warranted by any real exigence of metre" (*F*, p. 45). Syntactic inversion, a dated poetic affectation, implied for Pound the decadent world of "nacre" and "objets d'art." Pound wrote "1880" and "Why this Blot on Scutchen *between* 1922 and Lil' " beside the following lines:

> And if it rains, the closed carriage at four.
> And we shall play a game of chess:
> The ivory men make company between us
> Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door.
> (*F*, p. 13)

These lines clashed with the modernity of the surrounding "O O O O that Shakespeherian Rag" and "HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME." But Pound's annotation, "1880," also found fault with the scene of sexual

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inaction between the husband and wife; Pound accused Eliot of a stylistic as well as sexual listlessness. Modernism defined itself in opposition to that "1880" of literary and sexual decadence.

In keeping with his wish to remove traces of inversion from the poem, Pound quibbles with Eliot's diminutives, writing " 'one' wee red mouse" (from a Rudyard Kipling poem) in the margin of Eliot's "From which one tender Cupidon peeped out" (*F*, p. 11). Similarly, Pound put a box of disparagement around the word "little" in the lines, "Carrying / Away the little light dead people" (*F*, p. 13). In the passage,

> Above the antique mantel was displayed
> In pigment, but so lively, you had thought
> A window gave upon the sylvan scene,

he objected to the "had": "had is the weakest point" (*F*, p. 11). Pound deplored the weakness of "little" in the line, "Spread out in little fiery points of will," and objected to the phrase "of will" because it was a "dogmatic deduction but wobbly as well." Pound weeded out echoes of Prufrock: writing "Pruf[rock]" and "cadence reproduction from Pr[ufrock] or Por[trait of a Lady]" in the margins, Pound objected to "Time to regain the door" and to "And if I said 'I love you' should we breathe / Hear music, go a-hunting, as before?" (*F*, p. 107). Instead of the inverted "should we breathe," he suggested the straightforward "we should breathe." To be Prufrock and to be inverted were pathologies that Pound wished to cure.

Accusing Eliot of Prufrock's indecision, Pound writes, beside the line, "Across her brain one half-formed thought may pass": "make up yr. mind you Tiresias if you know know damn well or else you dont" (*F*, p. 47). By assuming that Tiresias, though bisexual, at least knows his mind, Pound expresses that it is possible to embrace bisexuality without losing stylistic decisiveness. Tiresias, then, is the key to Eliot's cure: Pound teaches Eliot, through the example of Tiresias, that one can be inverted *and* a masterpiece. In a footnote to *The Waste Land*, Eliot declares that Tiresias is "the most important personage in the poem," the character where "the two sexes meet." Pound convinced Eliot, by addressing him as Tiresias, that this androgynous seer was the poem's center.

Pound encourages Eliot to act, whatever the sexual act in question may be. Where the "I" makes a date with the apparently homosexual Mr. Eugenides, Eliot had vacillated: Mr. Eugenides

> asked me, in ~~abominable~~ French,
> To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel,
> And perhaps a weekend at the Metropole.
> (*F*, p. 43)

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Beside the "perhaps," Pound wrote: "Damn per'apsez."

In a 1922 volume of short stories about unmarried and implicitly homosexual men and women, George Moore used the word "perhaps" to signify a state of Tiresias-like androgyny, a pathological indecision about gender and sexual preference: "neither man nor woman, just a perhapser," sighs one of Moore's celibates.[44] Pound thought that Eliot's reliance on "perhaps" signified a similar indecisiveness: "perhaps" is the symptom of Eliot's inability to act, erotically or linguistically. Pound cures this hysteria by omitting the "perhaps," encouraging Eliot's "I" to indulge in that illicit weekend. In the margin of the line, "Perhaps his inclinations touch the stage," Pound wrote "Perhaps be damned" (*F,* p. 45). Pound seizes on that "perhaps"—the code for Eliot's ambiguous "inclinations"—as his primary hysterical symptom. Pound objects to a third "perhaps," writing "Georgian" beside the line, "Perhaps it does not come to very much" (*F,* p. 99). This Georgian line occurs in the context of the narrator's fear of sexual action: "The golden foot I may not kiss or clutch / Glowed in the shadow of the bed." This "I" is a Prufrock, afraid of desire and of direct statement; the golden foot he may not kiss or clutch is a poetic foot. Eliot's fear that "perhaps it does not come to very much" is a fear that the poem, *The Waste Land,* does not come to very much. Crossing out that doubt, Pound asserts the poem's power.

When Eliot confessed hysterical speechlessness—"I could not speak"—Pound underlined the phrase (*F,* p. 7). Did Pound dislike that confession, or did he underscore it because he recognized its importance? By emphasizing the words, Pound points out that Eliot *has* spoken, that the very act of confessing "I could not speak" means that silence is over. By articulating hysteria, Eliot conquers it, for Pound is always there to hear the hysterical utterance. I will now look at these articulations of hysteria.

The Waste Land was originally called "He Do the Police in Different Voices." The poem lost this title but remained inhabited by different voices and characters, many of them hysterical women. Eliot may have been trying to do the police—a symbol of male authority—but he ended up doing *woman* in different voices. The original title implied those states of speech which Freud described as "oracular," when the hysteric utters cryptic fragments, like the "I want to die" of the epigraph's Sibyl. Because the first line, "April is the cruellest month," repeats the Sibyl's death wish, the opening lines seem to be spoken by her. The metamorphosing speaker of the poem—now a sibyl, now Marie, now

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Tiresias—is herself or himself a hysteric, moving, like Charcot's Geneviève, through the stylized phases of a fit.

In *The Waste Land,* the Sibyl is the representation of Eliot's death wish, and his own vatic powers, as feminine. The poem's second sibyl is Madame Sosostris, "known to be the wisest woman in Europe"—a female Ezra Pound, whom Eliot certainly thought the wisest *man* in Europe, a soothsayer guiding Eliot toward his destiny. Like frigid Marie, who goes "south in the winter," Madame Sosostris suffers from the hysteric's chronic neuralgia: she has a "bad cold." Madame Sosostris, like Ezra Pound, reads Eliot's cards—the leaves of *The Waste Land*'s manuscript, which Pound, as late as 1969, called "the lost leaves" (*F,* p. xii). If the fragments of the poem are sibyl's leaves, then Pound is Madame Sosostris. In that seer, Eliot reconciles two contradictory representations of the hysteric: fraudulent, frigid malingerer, and oracle.

The other female hysteric in "The Burial of the Dead" is Marie, the poem's first "I" (if we do not count the epigraph): the sexless speaker of "April is the cruellest month" metamorphoses into Marie's "I":

> And when we were children, staying at the archduke's,
> My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,
> And I was frightened. He said, Marie,
> Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.
> In the mountains, there you feel free.
> I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.

This apparently affectless reminiscence reads like a childhood trauma in *Studies on Hysteria,* a memory without meaning or emotional charge. Marie remembers nothing but holding on tight to her male cousin, going down, and feeling free. She is a reader, like Madame Sosostris, who reads the cards, or Fresca, who reads the "pathetic tale of Richardson" (*F,* p. 23); the implication of Marie's nocturnal reading is either that she is insomniac, or that she is *not* having sex "much of the night." Her sexual desires are repressed, with her childhood trauma, and as Eliot went to Lausanne, she goes south, in search of warmth and a cure.

Marie's male counterpart in "The Burial of the Dead" is the speaker who remembers the scene in the hyacinth garden—a reminiscence like Marie's, uprooted from its context, unexplained: "... I could not / Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither / Living nor dead, and I knew nothing . . ." Anna O. suffered loss of speech, as well as "a high degree of restriction of the field of vision: in a bunch of flowers which gave her much pleasure she could only see one flower at a time"

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(*SH*, p. 26). Eliot's vision here is restricted not to one flower, but to one head of hair—the hyacinth girl's wet hair, which provokes hysterical loss of speech and vision. Images of women's hair return in the Medusa ("Around that head the scorpion hissed!" [*F*, p. 117]) and the woman who "drew her long black hair out tight / And fiddled whisper music on those strings."

This Medusa, who represents one trauma beneath Eliot's hysteria, as well as a projection of Eliot's own vatic verbal incandescence, reappears on a "burnish'd throne" in "A Game of Chess." Eliot uses Elizabethan and neoclassical styles for misogynistic ends: this passage's satiric thrust arises from dread of the woman's supremacy. She holds court over an array of vials which "troubled, confused / And drowned the sense in odors," like the voices at the end of "Prufrock." The smell of a woman—"Is it perfume from a dress / That makes me so digress?"—drowns Eliot's "sense": his sight. The speaker's eyes failed when he saw the hyacinth girl; that blind man returns in the Cleopatra set piece as a golden Cupidon who "hid his eyes behind his wing." What he wishes not to see is the woman on the burnished throne, on the seat of power. When the men in the poem, like Tiresias—or Tom, "boiled to the eyes, blind," at Tom's place—lapse into states of hysterical absence, and lose vision, the women ascend to the throne, where they are then dethroned by Eliot's satiric neoclassical voice (*F*, p. 5).

The male "I" admits "I could not speak"; Philomel is too far gone in her hysteria for even those four words. Raped and tongueless, she converts her speech into unintelligible bird-song, the hysteric's alternative language. She relives her trauma in hysterical code that is powerless as protest: "yet there the nightingale / Filled all the desert with inviolable voice / And still she cried, and still the world pursues, / 'Jug Jug' to dirty ears." Philomel metamorphoses into Vivien: "My nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad. Stay with me. / Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak." This wife is supposedly the hysteric, but it is her husband—like the man in the hyacinth garden passage—who cannot speak or see, and who can only remember "Those are pearls that were his eyes." Vivien is the interrogating analyst: "Do / You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember / Nothing?" Under the pressure of her questions he breaks into a song—"O O O O that Shakespeherian Rag": this rag is "Full Fathom Five," which signifies Phlebas the drowned Phoenician, and, obliquely, the dead Verdenal. Memories of dead men induce the poem's hysteria. If Tom Eliot is "boiled to the eyes, blind," he can remain blind to his own love for the

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drowned man. Blindness—as hysterical symptom—signifies the fact that a memory of some erotic significance has been drowned.

Drowned Phlebas is the male version of the drowned Ophelia. When Ophelia, the Victorian's favorite image of the madwoman, intones "Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night," she performs a poetic closure that eluded Eliot. By using the voice of a madwoman to end "A Game of Chess," which contained a "photographic" portrait of his own marriage to Vivien, Eliot demonstrates how deeply he identifies with her "Shakespeherian" hysteria. This ending—"Good night, ladies"—is parallel to the ending of "The Burial of the Dead"—"You! hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable,—mon frère!" Both endings address the reader; in one, Eliot impersonates Baudelaire, and addresses the reader as brother, and in the other, he impersonates Ophelia, and addresses the reader as sister—"sweet ladies." Ophelia—with Verdenal and Phlebas—is drowned by the poem's hysterical discourse. She drowns to the interjected, syncopated tune of "HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME," a hysterical feature of Eliot's text: it is a formulaic screen, a verbal tic that punctuates and disturbs the narrative, and leads to the shutting down of all rational speech, represented by the closing of Albert's bar ("Tom's place," Tom Eliot's mind) and by the allusion to Ophelia's madness and drowning.

In the original "Fire Sermon," Eliot satirized what Fresca reads; however, like Madame Sosostris' cards, what she reads is close to the poem's heart. Eliot first intended her to read "a page of Gibbon," whose chronicle of imperial decline suggests "broken Coriolanus" and his "falling towers" (*F*, p. 23). Eliot, however, replaced her "page of Gibbon" with "the Daily Mirror": In Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*, Sloppy, who does the police in different voices, is a "beautiful reader of a newspaper," and so Fresca's reading of newspapers is connected to the activity of the poem's original male subject (*F*, p. 125). Fresca also reads "the pathetic tale of Richardson," *Clarissa Harlowe*: Clarissa, like Philomel, was raped. Like tongueless Philomel, and speechless Eliot (in the hyacinth garden), Fresca has "much to say— / But cannot say it—that is just my way" (*F*, p. 23). However, Eliot distances himself, through satire, from this image of the poet as a depressed woman who "scribbles verses of such gloomy tone / That cautious critics say, her style is quite her own" (*F*, p. 27). He must distance himself from her because hysteria and poetry spring from the same source:

> The Scandinavians bemused her wits,
> The Russians thrilled her to hysteric fits.
> From such chaotic misch-masch potpourri

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> What are we to expect but poetry?
> When restless nights distract her brain from sleep
> She may as well write poetry, as count sheep.
> (*F*, p. 27)

Like Marie in "The Burial of the Dead," who spent her sleepless nights reading, Fresca writes poetry much of the night.

Eliot's misogynistic portrait of Fresca, however, is a screen: on the back of the first page of the "Fresca" typescript, Eliot penciled the first draft of the opening lines of "The Fire Sermon" as we know it: "The rivers tent is broken and the last fingers of leaf / Clutch and sink into the wet bank" (*F*, p. 25). This passage depicts disappointed sexuality; "the loitering heirs of City directors" have abandoned their "nymphs." In this free-verse irruption of his own voice behind the screen of the clipped couplets of the Fresca satire, Eliot repudiates the misogynistic projection of hysteria onto women, and recognizes that the experience of being "broken"—"the river's tent is broken," "the broken fingernails of dirty hands," "a broken Coriolanus"—is the story of his own dejection. The last words on the verso of the Fresca passage are "By the waters." When completed, the line reads "By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept," a reference to himself recovering from hysteria at Lausanne (on Lake Geneva, also called Lake Leman). When Eliot abandons misogynistic satire, he returns to autobiography: the hysterical technique of the poem results from his only fitful ability to speak directly from painful experience.

In the figure of Tiresias, Eliot experiences his affinity with the female hysterics of the poem. Through that bisexual seer, Eliot acknowledges that a male body can exist in conjunction with the oracular and hysterical powers of a Madame Sosostris. Tiresias' blindness allies him with the male hysteric whose sight fails when he sees the hyacinth girl, and with "old Tom, boiled to the eyes, blind"; with his "wrinkled female breasts," he resembles the woman in "Hysteria," whose shaking breasts were an emblem of her hysteria. Through Tiresias, Eliot enters the female typist's consciousness, for Tiresias, with the typist, "awaited the expected guest." Crucially, Tiresias enables Eliot to experience vicariously the sexual advances of the man who "assaults at once," for Tiresias foresuffers all.

All of the women in the poem—Philomel, the typist, the Rhine Maidens, Tiresias—are sexually violated, and respond in hysterical code to this violation. "Twit twit twit / Jug jug jug jug jug jug" (like the "Drip drop drip drop drop drop" of Eliot's water-dripping song, which he considered the sign of his cure) comes from a condition like Anna

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O.'s "deep-going functional disorganization" of speech in "moments of extreme anxiety"; indeed, Anna O.'s feeling of "profound darkness in her head, of not being able to think, of becoming blind and deaf, of having two selves" resembles Tiresias—double and blind—and the husband in "A Game of Chess," whose wife accuses him of knowing, seeing, and speaking nothing (*SH*, p. 24). What the Rhine Maidens know is that their river has been violated, its gold stolen: "weialala leia" is the hysteric response to that violation. A Rhine Maiden gives voice to Eliot's own experience of breakdown at Margate:

> 'On Margate Sands.
> I can connect
> Nothing with nothing.
> The broken fingernails of dirty hands.

Eliot first wrote "He had / I still feel the pressure of dirty hand" (*F*, p. 53)—but as Coriolanus falls from power and becomes "broken," the "I" who feels the pressure of the dirty hand is repressed, and Eliot leaves a predicate—"The broken fingernails of dirty hands"—without a subject who experiences it. More than fingernails are broken: "broken" is the sign of Eliot's sexual failure, shattered memory, and disorganized language. At the end of "The Fire Sermon," the quotation marks which placed Eliot's linguistic hysteria in the voice of a Rhine Maiden vanish, and he becomes the "I":

> la la
>
> To Carthage then I came
>
> Burning burning burning burning
> O Lord Thou pluckest me out
> O Lord Thou pluckest
>
> burning

Repression plucks away, word by word, his language.

Losing his language, Eliot resembles Anna O., who, deprived of words, "put them together laboriously out of four or five languages and became almost unintelligible." Each of the poem's five sections traces the same trajectory of depletion: memories of enacted desire return so intensely that by each section's end, Eliot's language is fractured. In the conclusion of "The Fire Sermon," the hysteria of "Burning burning burning burning" arises from the sexual scenes that came earlier: the intercourse of typist and young man, Philomel's rape, the Rhine Maidens' violation, the trysts of the nymphs and their City Directors, and the narrator's weekend with Mr. Eugenides. In "What the Thunder

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Said," the hysteria of the final pastiche of tongues is a response to Eliot's return, within that section of the poem, to the moment in the hyacinth garden: "My friend, blood shaking my heart / The awful daring of a moment's surrender / Which an age of prudence can never retract." In this passage, Eliot remembers a surrender so awful no repression can thoroughly bury it. In "What the Thunder Said," desire is ultimately stronger than prudence, for desire returns when broken Coriolanus revives, and when language resurges in "Here is no water." These revivals are followed by the conclusion's extreme retreat from desire into hysteria:

> London bridge is falling down falling down
>
> *Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina*
> *Quando fiam ceu chelidon*—O swallow swallow
> *Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie*
> These fragments I have shored against my ruins
> Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.
> Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.
>
> Shantih shantih shantih

The disorderly endings of "The Fire Sermon" and "What the Thunder Said" translate sexual desire into religious language. The "burning" of desire alternates with a passionate prayer, "O Lord Thou pluckest"; the sexual violation coded in "O swallow swallow," and the sexual impotence figured in "*Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie*" (abulia?) or "London bridge is falling down," give way to the mysticism of "Shantih." Similarly, the *attitude passionnelle* of the hysteric involved enactments of alternately sexual and spiritual ecstasy. "Burning burning burning burning" is a linguistic *attitude passionnelle*, like a tableau of Charcot's Geneviève, who "would fall and tumble on the floor as if making love, then in a minute strike the crucifixion pose or be in ecstasy like a saint."[45]

As hysterical discourse, *The Waste Land* remains passive: it invites a reader to master it. Unwilling to explain itself or move past hysterical disjunction, requiring a reader-as-collaborator ("mon semblable,—mon frère!") to unravel its disguises, it is a feminine text, and implies a male reader. Eliot's abulia creates antitheses of itself in the "flushed and decided" young man carbuncular, or the sailor (in excised portions from "Death by Water") who aims his "concentrated will against the tempest and the tide" (*F*, p. 63). Despite these representations of masculine agency, the poem's heart is in its passivity toward

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interpretation, the moments of collage or fragmentation which place enormous faith in the reader as analyst. In this sense, Eliot's manuscript was already inscribed with the necessity for a second man, Pound, to interpret its absences. Eliot's attitude toward his own poem as merely "chaotic" and his passivity toward revision correspond to a femaleness which we find in the poem itself. Eliot could "connect nothing with nothing"; it remained for Pound to redefine disjunction, to convert female hysteria, through male collaboration, back into a discourse of male power. Indeed, Pound's revisions changed *The Waste Land* from a series of *poems* into a unity which Pound trumpeted as "the longest *poem* in the English langwidge," nineteen pages "without a break."[46] Eliot owed Pound this illusion of seamlessness, and the accompanying sense of power.

Pound's symbolic act of taking up the poem, revising it, giving it value, and Eliot's symbolic act of surrendering his poem to Pound, convert the female text into an object within a homosocial economy. Similarly, the hysterical discourse of Anna O. lost meaning as female language when it was exchanged between Breuer and Freud, when its rebellious if not revolutionary language was subsumed within a text produced by two men. Luce Irigaray observes that "women are marked phallicly by their fathers, husbands, procurers": Pound fathered, husbanded, and procured Eliot's feminine *Waste Land,* and marked it as male.[47] By giving his text to Pound, Eliot set up the paradigm for the relationship that readers and critics have established with *The Waste Land*: man to man.

Eliot's footnotes are the embodiment of the implied male reader: they are an invitation to him. They demonstrate that the poem has absences which an external body must fill. The footnotes valorize the poem's hysteria, and convert it from meaningless chaos into allusiveness. Readers armed with the notes have approached *The Waste Land* not as if it were a fragment of hysterical discourse, but an artifact already converted, by Pound's mediation, into something masculine. Conrad Aiken, on the poem's publication, wrote that it succeeds "by virtue of its incoherence, not of its plan": if a woman had written a text with the properties of *The Waste Land,* its incoherence might not have been judged successful.[48] *The Waste Land* has always been a scene of implicit collaboration between the male poet and his male reader, in which Eliot's hysterical discourse, by the act of collusive, collaborative interpretation—by the reader's analytic listening—suffers a sea change into masculinity.

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[1] T. S. Eliot, quoted in Ronald Bush, *T. S. Eliot: A Study in Character and Style* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983), p. 70.

[2] Quoted in Richard Ellman, "The First Waste Land," in A. Walton Litz, ed., *Eliot in His Time* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1973), p. 51; quoted in Litz, "The Waste Land Fifty Years After," in Litz, *Eliot in His Time*, p. 4.

[3] I. A. Richards, "The Poetry of T. S. Eliot," in Jay Martin, ed., *A Collection of Critical Essays on* The Waste Land (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968).

[4] D. C. Fowler, in Martin, *Critical Essays*, pp. 97, 35.

[5] John Crowe Ransom, in Martin, *Critical Essays*, p. 15.

[6] Julia Kristeva, "Oscillation between 'Power' and 'Denial,' " in Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (editors), *New French Feminisms* (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), pp. 166–67.

[7] Dianne Hunter, "Hysteria, Psychoanalysis, and Feminism: The Case of Anna O.," *Feminist Studies*, 9 (1983), 474.

[8] My account of hysteria depends largely on Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830–1980* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985).

[9] Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, *Studies on Hysteria*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books), p. 46. Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text as *SH*.

[10] For a discussion of the archetype of the sibyl, see Nina Auerbach, *Women and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982).

[11] My account of the Eliots' marriage, and of their ailments, depends on Peter Ackroyd, *T. S. Eliot: A Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984). Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text as *L*.

[12] See Showalter, *The Female Malady*, chap. 7; see also Sandra M. Gilbert, "Soldier's Heart: Literary Men, Literary Women, and the Great War," *Signs*, 8 (1983), 422–50.

[13] T. S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909–1950* (New York: Harcourt, 1971), p. 25.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

[15] See T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound*, edited and with an introduction by Valerie Eliot (New York: Harcourt, 1971), xviii. I will not give line references for quotations from *The Waste Land*, but will give page references to the facsimile (cited as *F*) when discussing Pound's comments or omitted passages.

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[16] Quoted in Bush, *T. S. Eliot,* p. 56.

[17] See Grover Smith, "The Waste Land in the Making," *The Waste Land* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983), p. 67, and Harry Trosman, "T. S. Eliot and *The Waste Land:* Psychopathological Antecedents and Transformations," *Archives of General Psychiatry,* 30, No. 5 (May 1974), 709–17.

[18] Conrad Aiken, "An Anatomy of Melancholy," in Allen Tate, *T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Works* (New York: Dell, 1966), p. 195.

[19] See Trosman, "T. S. Eliot and *The Waste Land,*" for an account of Dr. Vittoz' methods.

[20] T. S. Eliot, "The *Pensées* of Pascal," *Essays, Ancient and Modern* (London: Faber, 1936), p. 142.

[21] See Bush, *T. S. Eliot,* p. 56; T. S. Eliot, "The Modern Mind," *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (London: Faber, 1980), p. 144.

[22] Quoted in James Miller, *T. S. Eliot's Personal Waste Land* (Philadelphia: Penn. State Univ. Press, 1977), p. 43.

[23] Quoted in Bush, *T. S. Eliot,* p. 8.

[24] Letter to Henry Ware Eliot, Sr., June 28, 1915, in the Beinecke Library, Yale University.

[25] For an account of Pound's and Eliot's relationship, see Donald Gallup, *T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound: Collaborators in Letters* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1970).

[26] Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism,* p. 70.

[27] Letter to Ezra Pound, Feb. 2, 1915, in the Beinecke Library, Yale University.

[28] These undated letters of Vivien Eliot are in the Beinecke Library, Yale University.

[29] Bush, *T. S. Eliot,* p. 55.

[30] For an account of homosociality, and its relation to misogyny, see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1985).

[31] Letter to Pound, Apr. 15, 1915; letter to Pound, Sept. 23, 1917; letter to Pound, Oct. 31, 1917. All three letters are in the Beinecke Library, Yale University.

[32] Letter to Pound, Oct. 16, 1920. I have excerpted these passages from a longer letter.

[33] D. D. Paige, *The Letters of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, 1971), p. 170. The letter is dated 24 Saturnus, An 1. Unexpurgated Paige transcription of the letter is in the Beinecke Library, Yale University.

[34] Remy de Gourmont, *The Natural Philosophy of Love,* trans. and with a postscript by Ezra Pound (London: Neville Spearman, 1957). I thank A. Walton Litz for leading me to Pound's postscript.

[35] See Timothy d'Arch Smith, *Love in Earnest: Some Notes on the Lives and Writings of English "Uranian" Poets from 1889–1930* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970).

[36] See letter to Eliot, Dec. 24, 1921, in Paige, *The Letters of Ezra Pound,* p. 169. In a letter to John Quinn, Pound restated, in similar words, his fear of artistic decadence: "I don't want to go soft, or get to producing merely 'objets d'art' instead of 'oeuvres.' " Quoted in B. L. Reid, *The Man from New York: John Quinn and His Friends* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), p. 437.

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[37] Pound's letter to his mother, Sept. 18, 1921, in the Beinecke Library, Yale University.

[38] See Miller, *T. S. Eliot's Personal Waste Land.*

[39] In a letter to Pound, Eliot described the original epigraph to the poem as "somewhat elucidative." Paige, *The Letters of Ezra Pound,* p. 171.

[40] Paris letter to Eliot, numbered 182 in Paige, *The Letters of Ezra Pound,* and dated approximately January 1922. Unexpurgated Paige transcription of the letter is in the Beinecke Library, Yale University.

[41] Quoted in Bush, *T. S. Eliot,* p. 70.

[42] Ellman, "The First Waste Land," p. 65.

[43] Paige, *The Letters of Ezra Pound,* p. 173.

[44] George Moore, *Celibate Lives* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1922), p. 80. I thank Elaine Showalter for pointing out to me Moore's "perhapsers."

[45] See Showalter, *The Female Malady,* pp. 150–54; quotation from George Frederick Drinka, *The Birth of Neurosis: Myth, Malady, and the Victorians* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), pp. 95–96.

[46] Paige, *The Letters of Ezra Pound,* p. 169.

[47] Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One,* trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1985), p. 31.

[48] Aiken, "An Anatomy of Melancholy," p. 202.

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Magical Strategies: The Supplement of Realism

Scott Simpkins

Magic realism seems plagued by a distinct dilemma, a problem arising primarily from its use of supplementation to "improve" upon the realistic text. The source of this nagging difficulty can be attributed to the faulty linguistic medium that all texts employ, and even though the magic realist text appears to overcome the "limits" of realism, it can succeed only partially because of the frustrating inadequacies of language. The magical text appears to displace these shortcomings through a textual apparition, but this appearance itself illustrates the representational bind which hampers its desired success. And thus the magic realists, always trying to overcome textual limitations, continuously fall short of their numinous goal.

In *Don Quixote,* Cervantes offers an appropriate example of the textual strategies employed in magical texts, and their ultimate failure, as Sancho betrays the creaky machinations that fool the less wary reader (Don Quixote himself, in this instance). Sancho, after all, is not deceived by "magic"—although Don Quixote insists otherwise.

Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel García Márquez contribute further to this supplemental discourse by examining the condition of textual magic itself in their own writings. Largely because of his close ties with the fantastic, the designation of Borges as a magic realist has created critical dissension, although he is credited by some critics as one of the major early influences on the contemporary magic realism movement which has flourished internationally since the early part of this century.[1] And, indeed, Borges' presence surfaces throughout a great deal of the magical strategies employed by the many practitioners of this textual sleight of hand. Moreover, his work also anticipates several of the major

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textual concerns which have developed among the generations of writers who have followed him. As Robert Scholes observes in *Fabulation and Metafiction,* the "opposition between language and reality, the unbridgeable gap between them, is fundamental to the Borgesian vision, and to much of modern epistemology and poetic theory."[2]

Even the term "magic realism" has engendered disagreement since Franz Roh introduced it into artistic discourse in the mid-1920s through the German phrase *Magischer Realismus,* a "counter-movement" in art through which "the charm of the object was rediscovered."[3] When his *Nach-Expressionismus (Magischer Realismus): Probleme der neuesten Europaischen Malerei,* published in German in 1925, was translated and disseminated in Spanish through the *Revista de Occidente* two years later, his articulation of this new sensibility in art doubtlessly had a strong influence on Latin American writers searching for a suitable means to express the "marvelous reality" unique to their own culture.[4] In *German Art in the 20th Century,* Roh later schematized the differences between expressionism and post-expressionism (which he associates with magic realism), but his focus upon the visual arts reduces the usefulness of his charted oppositions in a literary context. Still, the differences between realism and magic realism could, following Roh, be presented in this manner:

Realism	*Magic Realism*
History	Myth/Legend
Mimetic	Fantastic/Supplementation
Familiarization	Defamiliarization
Empiricism/Logic	Mysticism/Magic
Narration	Meta-narration
Closure-ridden/Reductive	Open-ended/Expansive
Naturalism	Romanticism
Rationalization/Cause and Effect	Imagination/Negative Capability

Through these necessarily limited oppositions, it may be much easier to envision how magic realism, as Roh suggested, "turned daily life into eerie form."[5] Roberto González Echevarría, in *Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim at Home,* traces the historical development of this concept from Roh, to Carpentier's *real maravilloso* and connections with surrealism, to Angel Flores' influential but limited 1955 essay, "Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction," so that any further recounting of its growth may well be superfluous. He maintains that the term arose from an

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"effort to account for a narrative that could simply be considered fantastic." The magic realist text "does not depend either on natural or physical laws or on the usual conception of the real in Western culture" because it is "a narrative . . . in which the relation between incidents, characters, and setting could not be based upon or justified by their status within the physical world or their normal acceptance by bourgeois mentality."[6] But, again, the allowance of the fantastic within this realm has led some critics, such as Luis Leal, to assert that

> magic realism cannot be identified with either fantastic literature or with psychological literature, neither with surrealism nor the hermetic literature that Ortega describes. Magic realism does not use, like superrealism, dream motifs; nor does it distort reality or create imaginary worlds, as do fantastic literature or science fiction; nor does it place importance on a psychological analysis of the characters, since there is no attempt to explain the motivations behind their actions or which prevent them from expressing themselves.[7]

These differences in boundaries offer yet another example of the difficulties involved in defining the limits of any period or genre. "The formula" for delimiting magic realism "has been used by many [critics] . . . as though they will find comfort in a concept with universal validity, like Classicism, or Romanticism, or (even) Realism," Emir Rodríguez Monegal observes, adding that "it is necessary to insist on the danger of general use of a formula that . . . is anything but universal."[8] As Fredric Jameson remarks, however, the term "magic realism"—despite its shortcomings—"retains a strange seductiveness."[9]

The similar interests of surrealism have also led to critical confusion regarding the concept of magic realism, especially since several writers have produced works strongly suggestive of both. In his book-length study of Alejo Carpentier, for example, González Echevarría stresses both Carpentier's ties with surrealism and those elements which set him apart distinctly as a magic realist. Even Carpentier's identification of "marvelous American reality" points to his preference for an ontological outlook toward the textual enterprise favored by Latin Americans, as opposed to the phenomenological European stance proffered by Roh, as González Echevarría suggests.[10]

> The Latin American writer preferred to place himself on the far side of that borderline aesthetics described by Roh—on the side of the savage, of the believer, not on the ambiguous ground where miracles are justified by means of a reflexive act of perception, in which the consciousness of distance between the

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observer and the object, between the subject and that exotic other, generates estrangement and wonder.[11]

Yet, both González Echevarría, and Rodríguez Monegal in "Lo Real y lo Maravilloso en *El Reino de Este Mundo,*" note that Carpentier—and several other magic realists—chose to move away from some of the more restrictive tenets of surrealism and turn toward what has become known as magic realism. "In spite of his fascination with Surrealism at one time in his life, Carpentier never completely succumbs to Breton and his theories," González Echevarría contends. "On the contrary, Carpentier endeavors to isolate in his concept of the 'marvelous' something which would be exclusively Latin American."[12] Others such as Borges and García Márquez, however, have departed from surrealism far more substantially than Carpentier.

Despite the various critical disagreements over the concept of magic realism, one element which does recur constantly throughout many magic realist texts, and therefore points to a unifying characteristic, is an awareness of the ineluctable *lack* in communication, a condition which prevents the merger of signifier and signified. Perhaps the problem with this type of supplementation is really nothing more than that of a rigorous, but overwhelmingly frustrated, endeavor to increase the likelihood of *complete* signification through magical means, to make the text—a decidedly unreal construct—become real through a deceptive seeming. Rosemary Jackson suggests that "the issue of the narrative's internal reality is always relevant to the fantastic, with the result that the 'real' is a notion which is under constant interrogation," and this seems to be the case. Use of the "real," in terms of signification, actually appears to eliminate the difference between the construct and the object it somehow reconstructs. Despite its undeniable artificiality, a super-realist painting of an apple, for example, may appear more "real" than an impressionistic rendition of one.[13]

Gabriel García Márquez, on the other hand, is a member of the generation of textual magicians to follow Borges (since Borges had a head start of twenty-five years). Like Borges, García Márquez employs a variety of supplemental strategies in an attempt to increase the significative force texts seem able to generate. In one of a series of interviews published as *The Fragrance of Guava,* he maintains that "realism" (he cites some of his realistic novels as examples) is "a kind of premeditated literature that offers too static and exclusive a vision of reality. However good or bad they may be, they are books which finish on the last page."[14] A "realistic" text is hardly a satisfactory mode, much less an accurate presentation of the thing in itself, García Márquez

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contends, because "disproportion is part of our reality too. Our reality is in itself out of all proportion."[15] In other words, García Márquez suggests that the magic text is, paradoxically, more realistic than a "realistic" text. And this realism is conjured up by a series of magical supplements—such as those found in his *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

To Jameson, Carpentier's concept of the "marvelous real" establishes a stance distinctly antithetical to the notion of supplementation as an active component of magic realism. Carpentier's "strategic reformulation" of the label of magic realism through the term *real maravilloso* produces "not a realism to be transfigured by the 'supplement' of a magical perspective," Jameson claims, "but a reality which is already in and of itself magical or fantastic."[16] But, with this assertion, Jameson seems to neglect the transmission and portrayal of the marvelous, an act effected through a textual medium which is clearly a supplementation of the agency of realism.

For someone who has said he would rather be a magician than a writer, García Márquez meets his desires halfway by being both in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.[17] Despite the many magical events (flying carpets, living dead, accurate portents, telekinesis, and so on), García Márquez claims he "was able to write *One Hundred Years of Solitude* simply by looking at reality, our reality, without the limitations which rationalists or Stalinists through the ages have tried to impose on it to make it easier for them to understand."[18] In effect, he is arguing that the magical text operates virtually as a corrective to traditional tenets of mimesis, incorporating those unreal elements which in themselves antithetically ground reality.

One Hundred Years of Solitude offers numerous examples of magical supplementation amid the description of approximately a century in the history of one family, a genealogy which recounts fantastic occurrences as though they were quite commonplace.[19] Generations of characters, beginning with the marriage of José Arcadio Buendía and Ursula Iguarán, also encounter the bizarre aspects of "real" life in the inherently supernatural tropics. Early in the novel, for instance, José Arcadio realizes that his plan to found a new village—Macondo—"had become enveloped in a web of pretexts, disappointments, and evasions until it turned into nothing but an illusion."[20] This unreal reality is reinforced further as a contagion of amnesia infects the entire village. But a plan is developed to label everything in Macondo so that its increasingly forgetful inhabitants can remember reality by writing it, a strategy which reveals the unseen fantastic element behind writing and its magical ability to create a reality.

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As the amnesia worsens, the villagers' situation parallels the seemingly universal—and also realistic—dilemma that accompanies language's indeterminacies: "Thus they went on living in a reality that was slipping away, momentarily captured by words, but which would escape irremediably when they forgot the values of the written letters" (*OHY*, p. 53). In the amnesia episode, accordingly, García Márquez discusses this decidedly realistic concern through a magical layer, a supplemental strategy that may enhance, through its own theatricality, the force of an otherwise commonplace development, boosting its significative show in the process through a transcendent power.

To prevent an overwhelming sense of disbelief, magic realists present familiar things in unusual ways (flying carpets, Nabokovian butterflies, mass amnesia, and so on) to stress their innately magical properties. By doing this, magic realists use what the Russian formalists called defamiliarization to radically emphasize common elements of reality, elements that are often present but have become virtually invisible because of their familiarity. And through a process of supplemental illusions, these textual strategies seem to produce a more realistic text. But whether this endeavor succeeds is another matter.

Borges' "The Garden of Forking Paths" offers a distinct illustration of this point. Within its detective-story framework, his story describes a magical novel (*The Garden of Forking Paths*) which, through a play of textual supplementation, attempts to encompass infinite linguistic possibilities. The story revolves around Ts'ui Pên's labyrinthian novel, first thought to be, as his grandson Yu Tsun describes it, "an indeterminate heap of contradictory drafts" because it consists of a nearly endless series of events which involve the same characters in different roles.[21] But a sinologist, Stephen Albert, whom Yu Tsun plans to murder, discovers another hermeneutical path through this textual maze. Albert claims that Ts'ui Pên's novel is designed to create a multi-narrative which saturates its textual capacity and thus achieves the desired state of complete signification. This textual strategy of magical supplementation seems to include everything, thereby overcoming the seemingly unavoidable linguistic lack.

Or does it? It is possible that Ts'ui Pên overlooks a basic problem concerning the text itself by taking its *textuality* for granted without calling its own provisional status into question. Ts'ui Pên (not unlike the surrealists) tries to subvert and overcome the text, but fails because he ironically remains bound by textual restraints. Still, this strategy, which reveals the desire to increase signification, to embrace the fluttering essence of illumination, always ends—because it begins—in loss.

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Therefore, a magical text such as Ts'ui Pên's can never enforce a center by remaining forever decentered. Yet Borges (through Ts'ui Pên) forces the reader, as does Sterne in *Tristram Shandy,* to consider the properties often unknowingly granted to texts while they surreptitiously reveal a certain absence that usually goes unnoticed. If this absence is taken further, multiplied in a self-consciously reflexive manner as in *The Garden of Forking Paths,* the text seems to encompass everything and lack nothing—although finally it cannot. But the magical attempt is there: bypassing the commonplace unity found in most realistic texts, the magical text tries to go beyond, to make the necessary swerve that Harold Bloom discusses in a different context, a *clinamen* away from the shortcomings associated with "realistic" texts.[22]

This plan appears to produce an "infinite text" such as the one Ts'ui Pên tries to create, even though its use of a static medium (language) constantly hampers its signification. Borges does manage to focus the reader's attention upon textual processes, producing as a result the defamiliarization which seems to form a major tenet of magic realism. And, the consciously poly-scenic text portrays more accurately an important aspect of reality, for there are always many different viewpoints of something at any given moment.

In Borges' story, for instance, Yu Tsun is not only a narrator; he is also concurrently an English professor, a prisoner, a friend (albeit newly acquired) to Albert, a spy for the Germans, an assassin, and a character in Ts'ui Pên's novel (as his actions magically duplicate those of several fictive pasts). Like the cubists who tried to show several perspectives of objects in order to capture three-dimensional essences, Borges constructs a multi-perspective text which appears to cover all fictional possibilities. Still, of course, this inherently faulted construct cannot go beyond its frustrating limitations as a linguistic text.

The stress here on the textual element of magic realism is not incidental, because its semiotic dysfunction may be caused by the medium magic realists use: language. Many theorists of the fantastic, in fact, identify the contemporary concern with language's shortcomings as a symptom of the modern temperament. To them, magical texts are one way of supplementing not only the failures of the modern text, but also the inadequacies of what is now called the postmodern condition (perhaps exemplified by existential thought) as well. Christine Brooke-Rose contends that this epistemological crisis has led to new desires in textual generation, revaluations of textual properties, and a poetics of defamiliarization:

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> The burden of this meaningless situation being unbearable, we naturally escape, and easily, into our more familiar reality, endowed with significance by our desire, whatever it might be, and displace the meaningless situation into a mere backdrop, apocalyptic no doubt, but a backdrop we cease to see.[23]

Perhaps magic realism's goal is to return our focus to the backdrop of textual reality, its production and function, by defamiliarizing it.

Consequently, the supplemental strategies used by magic realists may be geared toward "improving" the realistic text, a movement which realizes itself by exploiting language's ability to represent reality through fictive constructs. Borges' "fictions and inventions," for example, "move language *toward* reality, not away from it," Robert Scholes contends.[24] The textual project of magic realism, then, is displayed through its linguistically bound attempt to increase the capabilities of realistic texts. Yet this same strategy is necessarily undermined by the problematical nature of language. Borges' "The South" demonstrates this dilemma well as its protagonist, Juan Dahlmann, tries to use a magical text (*The Thousand and One Nights*) to direct his reality, to write (and rewrite) his existence fictionally. "To travel with this book, which was so much a part of the history of his ill-fortune, was a kind of affirmation that his ill-fortune had been annulled"; the narrator says, "it was a joyous and secret defiance of the frustrated force of evil."[25] But Dahlmann catches on to the lack amid this solely textual reality, a drawback that undoes its effectiveness.

As his train ride continues, Dahlmann abandons the book for the more real (though slightly less magical) magic of everyday life, and the narrator comments:

> The magnetized mountain and the genie who swore to kill his benefactor are—who would deny it?—marvelous, *but not so much more* than the morning itself and the mere fact of being. The joy of life distracted him from paying attention to Scheherezade and her *superfluous miracles*. Dahlmann closed his book and allowed himself to live. (*TS*, p. 170, emphasis added)

Here the narrator reveals the immanent failure of magical artifices as textual supplements: the magical text is not *much more* magical than reality itself, and to go too far beyond these natural perimeters seems an unnecessary and ineffective diversion. Dahlmann's observations suggest that even a more subtle magic still falls prey to this representational dilemma, although admittedly to a lesser extent. In fact, the diversion of a textual reality moves subjects farther away from reality itself, as Dahlmann, for instance, finds he cannot name the "trees and crop

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fields" he passes, "for his actual knowledge of the countryside was quite inferior to his nostalgic and literary knowledge" (*TS*, pp. 170–71). The fictive reality, rather than offering a more accurate reality, actually distances itself away from what could be called "actual" reality. Thus when Dahlmann is later accosted by "some country louts," he "decided that nothing had happened, and he opened the volume of *The Thousand and One Nights*, by way of suppressing reality" (*TS*, p. 173). The magical text, in this manner, overturns its *assumed* corrective nature and instead apparently displaces the reality it was thought to somehow enhance and re-ground.

Angel Flores traces the inception of magic realism during this century to a reaction to the "blind alley" of photographic realism, a textual approach that may undermine its effectiveness through its literality. Realism, in effect, produces a text plagued by the ordinary, the *too real*. And imagination, another aspect of the "real," is given short shrift at best. As Borges' narrator in "The Secret Miracle" says, compared with his imagination, "the reality was less spectacular. . . ."[26] Brooke-Rose identifies the particularly modern element of this concern by noting that

> the sense that empirical reality is not as secure as it used to be is now pervasive at all levels of society. Certainly what used to be called empirical reality, or the world, seems to have become more and more unreal, and what has long been regarded as unreal is more and more turned to or studied as the only "true" or "another equally valid" reality.

Amid this worldview it is not at all surprising that the "inversion of real/unreal is perfectly logical."[27]

Within this arena of uncertainty, magic realism demonstrates its hopeful scheme to supplement the realistic text through a corrective gesture, a means to overcome the insufficiencies of realism (and the language used to ground realism). Alain Robbe-Grillet describes his use of some imaginary seagulls that closely parallels this situation:

> The only gulls that mattered to me . . . were those which were inside my head. Probably they came there, one way or another, from the external world, and perhaps from Brittany; but they had been transformed, becoming at the same time somehow more real *because* they were now imaginary.[28]

This use of imagination claims to supplement reality by heightening its distinctive elements through ideal imagination, the essence and not necessarily the vehicle. Borges' use of imaginary authors and works, a practice also found in such magical writers as Jonathan Swift and Flann

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O'Brien, demonstrates this textual strategy as he creates a new reality through imagination, a reality which becomes "more real" (to return to Robbe-Grillet's assertion) as a result of the magical gloss applied to it through the process of creation.[29]

But this supplementary act also reveals an implicit despair, a collective lament about the problems involved in using language to convey reality (especially through the delusion of realism). (This is reflected by a comment about a later Aureliano in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* who abandons worldly pleasures for a lesser "written reality" [p. 357].) In other words, through the use of magical supplements, the linguistically determined text seems to span the chasm between signifier and signified. But it cannot. "Reality is too subtle for realism to catch it," Robert Scholes maintains. "It cannot be transcribed directly. But by invention, by fabulation, we may open a way toward reality that will come as close to it as human ingenuity may come."[30] Scholes's claim, however, betrays that very element which undermines such an assertion: attempts to signify can never overcome the deficiencies which any sign system presupposes. This is not to say that magical texts do not have any champions, however; Jameson, through a Heideggerian formula, observes that a magical supplement may allow the *world-ness* of the *world* to show itself.[31]

The magic realist's predilection toward the unreal may also reveal an awareness of the impossibility of successful signification—complete information transference—as magic is used to flaunt these same limitations. "You who read me, are You sure of understanding my language?" asks Borges' narrator in "The Library of Babel."[32] Magic realism courts the inevitable problem of signification by offering the impression of success, a supplemental diversion which appears to bypass the limitations of the realistic text, evading its failures through the incorporation of imagination.

Still, as neat as this sounds, perhaps it does not work. Although Jameson, while referring specifically to magic in the genre of romance, may be overstating the situation when he asserts that "the fate of romance as a form is dependent on the availability of elements more acceptable to the reader than those older magical categories for which some adequate substitute must be invented," he is also at least partially correct, for there is undoubtedly something unsatisfactory about the strategy of magic realism.[33] Even the naive inhabitants of García Márquez' Macondo eventually become indifferent to flying carpets.

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Plato contends in *Phaedrus* that the ideal language to use in any discourse is inescapably just that—ideal. In his Second Speech, Socrates says:

> "As for the soul's immortality, enough has been said. But about its form, the following must be stated: To tell what it *really is* would be a theme for a divine and a very long discourse; what it *resembles*, however, may be expressed more briefly and in human language."[34]

Socrates' assertion also unveils a major dilemma of magic realism: the divine language needed to bring about complete signification (what *it* "really is") can never transcend its illusory status. Supplementation (magic, in this instance) only adds another layer to the significative deception. The *thing itself* always slips away.

The textual economy that magic realism creates for itself undoubtedly introduces several problems. Angel Flores suggests that the desire to maintain some semblance of reality as a textual ground engenders an indeterminate element which further decreases what could be called reader comprehension. To Flores, supplementation of realism is far less preferable than working from an entirely fantastic base. After all, it is possible that the purely magical mode more closely approaches Socrates' "divine language" than does realism heightened by magic. In addition to the previously mentioned linguistic drawback that magic realism faces, the concern for the limits of partial magic adds another difficulty to the act of textual transmission, for—as Coleridge noted—the reader's doubt carries a great deal of weight.[35] Yet Tzvetan Todorov offers an interesting counterassertion: " '*I nearly reach the point of believing*': that is the formula which sums up the spirit of the fantastic. Either total faith or total incredulity would lead us beyond the fantastic: it is hesitation which sustains its life."[36] It is unlikely, however, that a reader would have any reason to "believe" what is said in a text; the question of doubt always lurks (or should always lurk, anyway) between the lines because the physical presence of the text ceaselessly calls attention to its inherent falseness as a construct.[37]

This stifling predicament may, in fact, explain why Borges and García Márquez themselves became disenchanted with magic and moved on to other concerns. In an interview Borges remarked:

> I feel that the kind of stories you get in *El Aleph* and in *Ficciones* are becoming rather mechanical, and that people expect that kind of thing from me. So that I feel as if I were a kind of high fidelity, a kind of gadget, no? A kind of factory producing stories about mistaken identity, about mazes, about tigers, about

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> mirrors, about people being somebody else, or about all men being the same man or one man being his own mortal foe.[38]

As Borges observes, the magical text cannot maintain its illusion under close scrutiny. García Márquez reveals a similar disquietude in this exchange with interviewer Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza:

> *A. M.:* Is it that you feel the success of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is unfair to the rest of your work?
>
> *G. M.:* Yes, it's unfair. *The Autumn of the Patriarch* is a much more important literary achievement. But whereas it is about the solitude of power *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is about the solitude of everyday life. It's everybody's life story. Also, it's written in a simple, flowing, linear and . . . superficial way.
>
> *A. M.:* You seem to despise it.
>
> *G. M.:* No, but since I knew it was written with all the tricks and artifices under the sun, I knew I could do better even before I wrote it.
>
> *A. M.:* That you could beat it.
>
> *G. M.:* Yes, that I could beat it.[39]

The underlying desire for rhetorical strategies which may increase the possibility of successful signification seems to be an optimistic semiotic gesture. Discontent with the strictures of realism, magic realists such as Borges and García Márquez construct elaborate magical supplements which imply a purifying concern for textual generation. "Fantasy has always articulated a longing for imaginary unity, for unity in the realm of the imaginary," Rosemary Jackson suggests. "In this sense, it is inherently idealistic. It expresses a desire for an absolute, an absolute signified, an absolute meaning."[40] Still, as García Márquez and Borges demonstrate, the use of magic is a self-conscious (perhaps painfully so) attempt to overcome significative loss, to bridge that space between the ideal and the achievable (or, semiotically—to remove the bar between signifier and signified). And in this regard, magical texts necessarily reveal their limits in the course of their operation.[41] But the magical text almost triumphs over its otherwise crippling imperfections by commenting on its own questionable condition while simultaneously presenting itself. In this manner, magical texts reflect upon their own blind spots, generating a metacritical discourse about their own indeterminate modality.

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Such is the case of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, which deals with this slippery situation by creating itself through the very workings of the novel it conceals itself within. Accordingly, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is "about" a book titled *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. García Márquez' novel becomes and betrays itself at the same time, playing upon the slippery textuality that can be granted only conditionally to any text, even one which tries to transcend this representational trap through magical supplementation.

García Márquez achieves—or attempts to achieve—this magical effect by having one character (Melquíades) write the novel, and another (Aureliano) decipher it from an unknown "code" (which is actually Sanskrit). The novel ends as Aureliano comes to the close of Melquíades' manuscript, and by manipulating the unavoidable conclusion that any text presupposes by beginning (perhaps with the exception of such arguably cyclical texts as *Finnegans Wake* and Julio Cortázar's *Hopscotch*), García Márquez correlates the two events as though it were a textual possibility—which ultimately it may be. By doing this, he manages to go beyond the bounds of realistic texts (mentioned earlier: "However good or bad they may be, they are books which finish on the last page") as his text ends both literally and magically within itself. The text virtually supplements itself out of its textual plane through a magical dodge which appears to prevent its conclusion (that is, the physical end of the book). Yet, within the drive behind the magical supplement, a maneuver constantly outmaneuvering itself like a dog chasing its tail, the text always disappears into itself, an envelope of infinite beginnings forever grounded by the medium it employs to escape the textual dead end.

[1] See, for example, Emir Rodríguez Monegal's "Realismo Magico Versus Literatura Fantastica: Un Dialogo de Sordos," in *Otros Mundos Otros Fuegos: Fantasía y realismo mágico en Iberoamérica*, Memoria del XVI Congreso Internacional de Literatura Iberoamericana (Michigan State University, Latin American Studies Center, 1975), pp. 25–37, and Roberto González Echevarría's *Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim at Home* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1977), which both discuss Borges in relation to magic realism.

[2] Robert Scholes, *Fabulation and Metafiction* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1979), p. 9.

[3] Franz Roh, *German Art in the 20th Century* (Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1968), p. 70.

[4] González Echevarría develops this assertion at length in *Alejo Carpentier*, p. 115.

[5] Roh, *German Art*, p. 84.

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[6] Angel Flores, "Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction," *Hispania,* 38 (1955), 109.

[7] Cited in Rodríguez Monegal's "Realismo Magico Versus Literatura Fantastica." All translations of this essay and Rodríguez Monegal's "Lo Real y lo Maravilloso en *El Reino de Este Mundo,*" *Revista Iberoamericana,* 37 (1971), 619–49, are by Kate Meyers. In Spanish, this passage reads:

> el realismo mágico no puede ser identificado ni con la literatura fantástica ni con la literatura sicológica, pero tampoco con el surrealismo o la literatura hermética que describe Ortega. El realismo mágico no se vale, como el sobrer-realismo, de motivos oníricos; tampoco desfigura la realidad o crea mundo imaginados, como lo hacen los que escriben literatura fantástica o ciencia ficción; tampoco da importancia al análisis sicológico de los personajes, ya que no trata de explicar las motivaciones que los hacen actuar o que les prohiben expresarse.

[8] Rodríguez Monegal, "Realismo Magico Versus Literatura Fantastica," p. 26. The second half of this passage reads in Spanish: "Es necesario insistir en el peligro de esta utilización general de una fórmula que . . . tiene de todo menos de universal."

[9] Fredric Jameson, "On Magic Realism in Film," *Critical Inquiry,* 12 (Winter 1986), 302.

[10] González Echevarría, *Alejo Carpentier,* pp. 109–17.

[11] *Ibid.,* p. 116.

[12] *Ibid.,* p. 123.

[13] Thus Rosemary Jackson was probably off base when she concluded, in *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (New York: Methuen, 1981), p. 36:

> The text has not yet become non-referential, as it is in modernist fiction and recent linguistic fantasies (such as some of Borges's stories) which do not question the crucial relation between language and the "real" world outside the text which the text constructs, so much as move towards another kind of fictional autonomy.

[14] Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza and Gabriel García Márquez, *The Fragrance of Guava,* trans. Ann Wright (London: Verso, 1983), p. 56.

[15] *Ibid.,* p. 60.

[16] Jameson, "On Magic Realism in Film," p. 311.

[17] George R. McMurray, *Gabriel García Márquez* (New York: Ungar, 1977), p. 86.

[18] Mendoza and García Márquez, *The Fragrance of Guava,* pp. 59–60.

[19] After all, as Alejo Carpentier notes in "Lo Real y lo Maravilloso en *El Reino de Este Mundo,* "what is the history of [Latin] America but a chronicle of marvelous reality?" (p. 636). In Spanish, this passage reads: "¿qué es la historia de América toda sino una crónica de lo real-maravilloso?"

[20] Gabriel García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude,* trans. Gregory Rabassa (New York: Avon Books, 1971), p. 22. All subsequent quotations from *One Hundred Years of Solitude* will be taken from this text and cited parenthetically as *OHY.*

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[21] Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*, ed. Donald Yates and James E. Irby (New York: New Directions, 1964), p. 20.

[22] See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973).

[23] Christine Brooke-Rose, *A Rhetoric of the Unreal: Studies in Narrative and Structure, Especially of the Fantastic* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981), p. 9.

[24] Scholes, *Fabulation and Metafiction*, p. 10.

[25] Borges, *Ficciones*, ed. Anthony Kerrigan (New York: Grove Press, 1962), p. 170. All subsequent quotations from "The South" will be taken from this text and cited parenthetically as *TS*.

[26] Borges, *Labyrinths*, p. 92.

[27] Brooke-Rose, *A Rhetoric of the Unreal*, p. 4.

[28] Alain Robbe-Grillet, "From Realism to Reality," in *For a New Novel: Essays on Fiction*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Grove Press, 1965), pp. 161–62.

[29] Aureliano and his friend Gabriel suggest that texts verify reality when they settle a debate about the reality of an alleged event by asserting that "after all, everything had been set forth in judicial documents and in primary-school textbooks." Writing is therefore granted the capacity to confirm reality. But the narrator points out this semiotic dilemma by noting that the two "were linked by a kind of complicity based on real facts that no one believed in . . ." (*OHY*, p. 359).

[30] Scholes, *Fabulation and Metafiction*, p. 13.

[31] Jameson, "Magical Narratives: Romance as Genre," *New Literary History*, 7 (1975), 142.

[32] Borges, *Labyrinths*, p. 58.

[33] Jameson, "Magical Narratives," p. 143.

[34] Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. W. C. Helmbold and W. G. Rabinowitz (Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), p. 28 (emphasis added).

[35] Magic realism presupposes a certain amount of doubt from the reader who can never escape that element of make-believe which pervades magic. The reader, like José Arcadio, faces "the torment of fantasy" (*OHY*, p. 45).

[36] Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard (Cleveland, Ohio: Press of Case Western Reserve Univ., 1973), p. 31.

[37] Even those texts which question the notion of truth/fiction—such as the nonfiction novel, the new journalism—or even those forms of the media which present daily *versions* of current events, exhibit nothing more, in the long run, than a purely provisional status, a status forever shifting under the influence of relative values and acts (perception, interpretation, analysis, and so on).

[38] Richard Burgin, *Conversations with Jorge Luis Borges* (New York: Holt, 1969), p. 130.

[39] Mendoza and García Márquez, *The Fragrance of Guava*, p. 63.

[40] Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, p. 179.

[41] Borges' narrator in "The Secret Miracle" comments: "Hladik felt the verse [drama] form to be essential because it makes it impossible for the spectators to lose sight of irreality, one of art's requisites" (*Labyrinths*, pp. 90–91).

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Forster's Trespasses: Tourism and Cultural Politics

James Michael Buzard

"I have always respected guide books—particularly the early Baedekers and Murrays." So wrote E. M. Forster in a late edition of his own guide to Alexandria; but it may be that his respect was in the manner of one's esteem for a loyal opponent.[1] For Forster could look back on a career marked by considerable critical engagement with the phenomenon of tourism, the vast and complex set of institutions and practices for which Baedeker and Murray had long been familiar symbols. The inevitable mark of the tourist, the guidebook had, by Forster's time, already come to stigmatize its bearer in contrast to all that was indigenous, authentic, and spontaneous. In 1869 Leslie Stephen sounded an already familiar note when he vented his wrath in *Cornhill Magazine* against "the ordinary tourist [who] has no judgment, [who] admires what the infallible Murray orders him to admire . . . [and who] never diverges one hair's breadth from the beaten track of his predecessors. . . ."[2]

The passivity that so irritated Stephen was encouraged by the guidebooks' practice, since the 1830s, of arranging "descriptive and practical information along numbered 'routes' that extended from one large town to another"; readers were offered the structured freedom of choosing their own itineraries from within the range of choices covered by Baedeker and Murray, who could presumably be trusted as to which was the beaten track and which the nooks and corners.[3] The books also suggested durations for visits, computed in hours for museums, markets, and temples, and in days for whole towns or regions. The middle-class traveler on his much anticipated and limited holiday required a more finely calibrated gauge of the value of various

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destinations than had hitherto seemed necessary: Florence thus became a five-day city, "Rome and environs" merited a fortnight, and so on.[4]

This arithmetical calculation of cultural time contributed to the guidebooks' authority as arbiters of cultural value—an authority that was invoked and assaulted frequently and stridently in the Victorian period. Observers like Stephen, Charles Lever, Frances Trollope, and others resorted to editorials and satirical portraits in order to exorcise the bogey of tourism, bequeathing a variety of stock characters and incidents to the repertoire of fiction. Forster clearly drew from this repertoire: from the earliest notes in the manuscript "Old Lucy"—eventually to become *A Room with a View*—one finds him making considerable sport with English sightseers in familiar ways. Yet from the beginning of his career Forster seems to seek deeper insight into the experience of tourism.

One scene in particular from "Old Lucy" offers a view of his increasingly complex awareness of the dynamics of sightseeing. Carrying, as had Forster himself, Ruskin's "invaluable and exasperating" *Mornings in Florence,* the heroine goes at once to the Church of Santa Croce, heeding Ruskin's advice in his opening chapter that she "wait . . . for an entirely bright morning; rise with the sun, and go to Santa Croce."[5] Having allowed her to be led to the church, Forster launches her into a series of typical touristic pitfalls and observations:

> She began by finding a sepulchral slab, the book informing her that if she did not like it, she was to leave Florence at once. She liked it very much, till a bowed backed sacristan who had observed her heretical conduct stole up to her and told her in broken English that she was looking at the wrong slab. He led her to the right one which was trimmed with a wreath of attentive tourists, and she did not like it so well. (*LN,* p. 22)

Discouraged by such discrepancies, Lucy closes her book and watches her fellow travelers, who shuffle obediently through the church according to the prescriptions of their guidebooks. The "Baedeker transit" leads travelers in a steady stream up the right aisle, around the transepts and chapels, and back down the left aisle, while the *Mornings in Florence* tour necessitates somewhat more "mazy movements." The guidebooks determine not only the route but also the reactions of their readers. One young couple stands at Settignano's tomb of Carlo Marsuppini, puzzled by Ruskin's condemnation of it, and Lucy listens as they briefly attempt to exert an independent aesthetic judgment. Soon submitting, however, to the "ordinary conditions of tourist hurry," they accept received wisdom (*MF,* p. 10). Lucy notices that "most of the

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visitors were better trained [than this couple], and abused without restraint the vanity, the vulgarity, the meaness [sic], the heartlessness of the tomb" (*LN,* pp. 23–24).

This scene, with its "red nosed people carrying red books" [i.e., Baedekers] through the church, clearly derives from the Victorian convention of tourist-mockery.[6] Yet the above passages also reveal Forster's fascination with the extensive power of the guidebooks in determining the kinds of experiences tourists will have at literally every step. A closer look at Forster's use of Ruskin as an authority on Santa Croce will place the phenomenon of tourism as Forster encountered it in a broader perspective. In the Preface to *Mornings in Florence,* Ruskin had spoken of the "real duty" of his Oxford professorship as involving not only lectures on the campus, but practical guidance for travelers in Italy as well. Determined to help the tourist achieve a closer relationship with the Italian artifacts than is presently available, he hopes that his essays "may be found of use if read in the places they describe, or before the pictures to which they refer" (*MF,* p. iii).

The traveler consulting Ruskin in Santa Croce, however, must not lose sight of the site for the sake of the book, as tourists in satirical scenes typically do; Ruskin wants to reform touristic experience, to return it to the authentic object of its interest. But he can accomplish this only by dislodging the discourse of Murray and Baedeker, the discourse of the beaten track. Thus he engages in a series of minor scuffles with the Murray he assumes every reader to be carrying. His chapter on Santa Croce abounds with references like "as your Murray will tell you," or "as your Murray calls it," usually followed by some comment on Murray's inadequacy or superficiality.

Ruskin also assumes a sheep-like reader appropriate to Murray's tutelage, and throughout the chapter his sarcasm attempts to shame or wheedle the reader into direct confrontation with the object.

> Without looking about you at all, you may find, in your Murray, the useful information that it is a church which "consists of a very wide nave and lateral aisles, separated by seven fine pointed arches." And as you will be—under ordinary conditions of tourist hurry—glad to learn so much, *without* looking, it is little likely to occur to you that this nave and two rich aisles required also, for your complete present comfort, walls at both ends, and a roof on the top . . . . (*MF,* pp. 10–11)

In this and similar passages, Ruskin aims to subvert the reigning discourse of Murray by incorporating it ironically into his own—hence the frequent derisive quotation and undermining of Murray's descrip-

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tions. Furthermore, his attack on Murray takes the form of a progressive enterprise, of which the initial "Santa Croce" chapter represents but the first step. The reader must have his old habits purged by the refining fire of Ruskin's irony, and he is periodically given opportunities to prove himself worthy of continuing the quest.

The climactic test of the opening chapter of *Mornings in Florence* occurs at the Marsuppini tomb, by which Forster's heroine had settled herself in "Old Lucy"; for Ruskin's reader the point is to differentiate between authentic and inauthentic sculptural drapery. Having identified the real thing in the sepulchral slab of Galileo (which Lucy had seen "trimmed with a wreath of attentive tourists"), Ruskin turns to the "much-celebrated" Settignano for contrast, finding it

> wholly vulgar and mean in cast of fold. Under your feet, as you look at it, you will tread another tomb of the fine time, which, looking last at, you will recognize the difference between false and true art, as far as there is capacity in you at present to do so. And if you really and honestly like the low-lying stones, and see more beauty in them, you have also the power of enjoying Giotto, into whose chapel we will return to-morrow . . . . (*MF*, p. 22)

Thus the reformist project will continue day after day, until the tourist has constructed a fresh and entire view of his surroundings by removing the obstructing wall of Murray's distorting language. Yet as Forster appreciated, Ruskin's ironic enterprise is itself subject to further irony: far from being in renewed and intimate contact with real things, Forster finds the Ruskin-carrying tourist at yet another remove from the supposed objects of tourist attention. Ruskin's reformist text is no better than the established Murrays and Baedekers—as Lucy witnesses, all are instruments of illusion and participate in the manufacturing of artificial tourist response.

Through tourism, Forster learned early and well that the approach to "the real" in culture or history always proceeds through some "prior textualization," and that the urge for a reform that will sweep away all previous texts—an urge he felt quite acutely—finds utterance in only another text.[7] Perhaps this is why guidebook satire plays only a relatively minor role in a body of work otherwise so often concerned with tourism. As he shaped *A Room with a View* into its final version, Forster cut the lengthy passage describing Lucy's observations in Santa Croce, and many others like it, down to mere passing jokes, focusing instead on the more central matter of Lucy's personal development. Tourism now affords a public, almost a political, context for the private interest of the novel. Forster characteristically regards this context in

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imperial terms: Lucy belongs to an occupying force that has infiltrated its hosts' society but that remains detached and aloof from it. She undergoes her awakening "as a citizen of that curious tourist state which tolerant Italy has allowed to grow up—a state with special laws and customs, special food, special hours for meals, special clothes and special privileges" (*LN*, pp. 21–22). Shifting attention from the outward fetish of tourist satire—the guidebook—to a view of tourism *from within*, Forster establishes tourism as a system of meaning with its own definitions, validations, and prohibitions. His art illustrates what Althusser called "an *internal distantiation* from the very ideology from which [it] emerged"[8]; shaped by the discourse of tourism, his art also provides a critical view of the conditions and strictures of the discourse's ideological boundaries. Stemming from this difficult position, the special project of Forster's early work (which establishes conditions on which his later writings are based) is to investigate the conditions of existence within the discourse of tourism and the possibilities of circumventing or transcending the obstacles tourism places between the traveler/writer and the true understanding he seeks, both of himself and of the visited place.

Forster, the writer, begins in tourism. After going down from Cambridge, he exercised the conventional option of completing his education by embarking on a one-year tour of Italy. Already conscious of his homosexual inclinations and afflicted by a wide range of self-doubts, Forster was also continuing to cope with the dependence on maternal figures he had known since childhood, a problem that the circumstances of his tour did nothing to alleviate.[9] Arrived in Italy and settling into the routine of the English pensione, he bristles at the shallowness of his exposure to the country, complaining to Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, "I wish I didn't see everything with this horrible foreground of enthusiastic ladies, but it is impossible to get away from it."[10] Standing between him and the features of Italian life he longs to contact, the ladies are the sentries of his dependence and immaturity. Even the proprietress of the pensione, who "scatters her Hs like morsels," patronizingly calls him " 'the young gentleman.' "[11]

Forster's experience of tourism in this stifling atmosphere of dominating middle-aged women—so disappointingly similar to all he had known before Cambridge—offered no opportunity for an encounter with bona-fide otherness, but only the absurd repetitions or grotesque exaggerations of familiar domestic pressures. Tourism provided the efficient cause that stirred these pressures into the explosive "Story of a Panic," Forster's first work of fiction, a fantasy of

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deliverance from the tourist empire. Personal wish fulfillment, however, necessarily impinges on the broader cultural dynamics of tourism, often with unforeseen consequences. In fact, as an examination of the story reveals, a quixotic projection of individual liberation ultimately reflects the cultural conflict at the heart of tourism. To see this, we need first to outline the fantasy component of the story (which several critics have accurately described), then to note the way the tale reneges on its own promise of escape.[12]

The story relates the transformation of a typically bourgeois tourist outing—a picnic in the hills above Ravello—into the scene of a recalcitrant boy's sudden possession by the god Pan. The narrator is as bland and stiff-necked an Englishman as one could ever hope to encounter, and Forster's irony hovers behind his every line. "Ravello is a delightful place with a delightful hotel in which we met some charming people," the narrator drones; among them are a couple of spinster aunts, "the two Miss Robinsons" and their fourteen-year-old nephew Eustace.[13] The sullen youth is presently resisting the narrator's sporadic attempts to reform his character, as well as the efforts of a clergyman named Sandbach to "fit him for one of our great public schools" (*CO,* pp. 3–4). But during a picnic in the wooded hills, it is Eustace who remains behind to be taken by Pan, while the others flee in brute fear of the god's coming. The party reaches the foot of the hill and is composing itself in some embarrassment, when the Misses Robinson realize that Eustace is not among them; when they return for him he is "lying motionless on his back," his hand "convulsively entwined in the long grass," wearing a "peculiar smile" on his face (*CO,* p. 14). Nearby are some goat-prints in the moist earth.

The rest of the story concerns the ineffectual attempts made by this mundane narrator and his compatriots to reckon with the changes wrought upon Eustace, who suddenly exhibits a desire to do the most inappropriate things. He runs about whooping like an Indian; he kisses an old peasant woman and gives her a bunch of flowers. Worst of all, he takes an inordinate interest in Gennaro, "the stop-gap waiter [at their hotel], a clumsy, impertinent fisher-lad, who had been had up from Minori in the absence of the nice English-speaking Emmanuele" (*CO,* p. 19). There are conferences and theories about the boy's condition, and the tourists attempt to confine him to his room, some thinking him touched by the sun and some by the devil; but with Gennaro's help Eustace breaks his bonds, and the story concludes with the "shouts and laughter of the escaping boy" (*CO,* p. 38).

Sexual, social, and mythic constraints combine to overdetermine

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Eustace's transformation, and help account for the extraordinary violence with which Forster invests it. By condensing all the domestic follies and regulations that plagued him, tourism allowed Forster to address many of his frustrations at once and to change them in a flash into gratifications. Mr. Sandbach's banal Christianity and the social and sexual proprieties of the Misses Robinson and the English pensione all evaporate at the coming of Pan, and Eustace is saved by a deus ex machina that is also an act of rape.[14] This transgression then inspires another, in Eustace's sudden bond with Gennaro—its homoeroticism cloaked as the traditional (and publishable) "blood brotherhood," but still scandalous enough to the stodgy narrator as an affront to the strictures of sex and class:

> Eustace sprang to meet [Gennaro], and leapt right up into his arms, and put his own arms round his neck. And this in the presence, not only of us, but also of the landlady, the chambermaid, the facchino, and of two American ladies who were coming for a few days' visit to the little hotel. (*CO*, pp. 21–22)

Departing in imagination from the restraining imperial culture of tourism, one gains access to the culture of resistance; and we receive many hints that a whole society of Pan's disciples is thriving just beneath the surface of the accepted but inauthentic world of tourists and their "hosts." The narrator looks back to glimpse the old peasant woman to whom Eustace has given the bouquet, and observes that her "companions seemed as much astonished at the proceedings as we were. But she herself had put the flowers in her bosom, and was murmuring blessings" (*CO*, p. 21). Pan-culture is indifferent to the national, sexual, or class distinctions so essential to the maintenance of the tourists' regime. The story's fantasy endorses the kind of imaginative rebellion against entrenched forces that informed Ruskin's attack on Murray at Santa Croce: one arrives at the authentic by destroying the repressive layer of custom, either methodically or explosively. But to do this one must sharply divide that part of the local culture that is in complicity with tourism ("the nice English-speaking Emmanuele") from the bedrock of local life, the refreshingly coarse, violent, and refractory heart of the living culture (Gennaro). While the collaborators fit neatly into their assigned roles in the service of the occupying forces, the resisters never will. A glimpse of Gennaro's body provides, for Forster, the image of ungovernable authenticity, the body of the true Italy, which cannot be made to fit the demands of encroaching tourism:

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"There was Gennaro . . . with his arms and legs sticking out of the nice little English-speaking waiter's dress suit" (*CO*, p. 21).

The representation of foreign cultural authenticity by means of an irrepressible human body is a characteristic Forsterian act of metonymy: bodies assert themselves and their materiality throughout Forster's work, in opposition to the falsely spiritual and romanticized experience that is tourism's stock in trade. Yet here we confront the problem that undermines Forster's liberating project: for if tourism can offer its clients the enthralling opportunity to indulge their fantasies without the ordinary limitations domestic life imposes, some body somewhere must pay the price. What becomes of the Italian body in this early story? On this point, critics have failed to give an adequate account of the fact that, to all intents and purposes, Gennaro is martyred so that Eustace can escape.[15] The Italian dies of no apparent cause, merely collapsing when Eustace flees; as the narrator unsatisfactorily puts it, "Something had gone wrong inside him, and he was dead" (*CO*, p. 38). In fact, whatever their other merits, wish-fulfillment readings of this story, such as Wilfred Stone's, are apt to overlook the obtrusive corpse in the final sentence: "Signora Scarfetti [the landlady] burst into screams at the sight of the dead body, and, far down the valley towards the sea, there still resounded the shouts and laughter of the escaping boy" (*CO*, p. 38). The story's end yokes together Gennaro's lifeless body and Eustace's absconding spirit, the Signora's screams and the boy's triumphant laughter, giving a view of Forster's reckoning with the cost of his English character's liberation. Without a tourist world from which to escape, no escape is imaginable; so Forster must ratify the tourist enterprise even as he seeks to leave it behind. Gennaro's corpse intrudes in the conclusion as a troubling suggestion—one that will reappear in other places—that in fact the utopian culture so robustly bodied-forth by Gennaro is after all a mirage, only another tourist's fantasy, and that the material local life is being consumed in sustaining the visiting hordes who seek to purge their frustrations and live out their fantasies on tour.

From this point on, many of Forster's plots are devoted to the staging of such sudden revelations, often resulting from a character's crossing, or being pulled across, the boundary encircling the tourist world. Yet the futility of personal abstention from the discourse of tourism remains a debilitating factor in such projections, causing Forster's texts continually to split into opposing narratives of fantasy and materiality. In *A Room with a View* we find the "body politics" of "The Story of a Panic" translated into a seemingly conventional

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marriage plot. Once again a powerless and sexually naive protagonist—here, the ingenue Lucy Honeychurch—lurks behind the screen of custom, class, and sex that guards the tourist from intimate contact with indigenous life. She may look, but not be touched; Forster again invests the notion of active participation in Italian life, or indeed in any life, with the promises and dangers of sexual passage. The scene that depicts Lucy's "symbolic loss of virginity" is justifiably among the more celebrated in Forster's work.[16]

Defying the prudent counsel of the spinster Miss Alan, Lucy has left the safety of the Pensione Bertolini to walk alone, at dusk, through the streets of Florence. She feels confined, as had Forster, by the tourist routine, but she lacks "any system of revolt."[17] Going into a souvenir shop, she willfully purchases postcards of an inappropriate nature—Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* and the like—but "though she spent nearly seven lire, the gates of liberty seemed still unopened" (*RV,* p. 48). "Nothing ever happens to me," Lucy thinks as she enters the Piazza Signoria; but the square at twilight becomes the site of the trivial quarrel between two locals that erupts into a typical Forsterian vision of escape through sexual transgression. Forster's prose reflects Lucy's blank puzzlement and horror.

> They sparred at each other, and one of them was hit lightly upon the chest. He frowned; he bent towards Lucy with a look of interest, as though he had an important message for her. He opened his lips to deliver it, and a stream of red came out between them and trickled down his unshaven chin. (*RV,* pp. 48–49)

Looking up as she swoons, Lucy spies "Mr. George Emerson . . . looking at her across the spot where the man had been" (*RV,* p. 49).

As in "The Story of a Panic," Forster enlists an image of violent penetration to shatter the bonds of touristic proprieties, and again, Forster's use of the Italian body sets up parallel but opposing readings for the scene. According to the ostensible fantasy plot, what cannot yet happen for Lucy and George can be symbolically enacted on the body of a random Italian and registered as a foreshadowing: there is sexual fulfillment to come for Lucy, but we must all wait. The wish-fulfillment reading proposes an escape from a state of alienation into one of spontaneous, instinctive participation, embodied by the stereotypical image of the Italian as a fount of uncontrollable and sudden passions. In this scheme, the tourist is the counterpart in public terms of the sexually uninitiated or even maladjusted individual, the virgin or voyeur. The association of sexual and cultural roles helps to establish an

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extensive symbolic opposition between images reflecting involvement in the elemental forces of life and images drawn from a merely visual register of tourism and sightseeing.

The Forsterian clergymen and maiden aunts defend the protected viewpoint of the tourist, from which one can observe while remaining pure of the taint of the observed: securely locked up in the pensione, Miss Alan sighs "in a voice of relief" at the end of a day that it is at last "too late to go out . . . [since] all the galleries are shut" (*RV*, p. 44). But Lucy is chafing at her confinement to the culture of galleries and Baedekers, and she longs to go "round the town in the circular tram—on the platform by the driver" (*RV*, p. 44). Upon transgressing tourist protocol by leaving the pensione unescorted, Lucy has her vision of escape, but it is one that ironically confirms the very authorities that had hitherto been the target for satire: innocence really does have to be guarded, since it can be jeopardized under the most fortuitous circumstances.

This highly suggestive scene presents a moment of recognition, quickly repressed, of life's "undeniables": violence, death, and sexuality. Yet the appearance of the Italian body should alert us to the overall scheme of displacement that informs the action. Once again, the Italian male body plays a crucial role in an allegory of sexual/social emancipation. In "The Story of a Panic," however, Gennaro's body had at least temporarily provided an image of intransigent cultural authenticity; here, the nameless victim finds himself pressed into service as the very site on which the displaced consummation is enacted. Possessing a name and a history, Gennaro had remained a presence in the story. In contrast, his counterpart in *A Room with a View* vanishes almost magically the moment his function has been performed: "That was all. A crowd rose out of the dusk. It hid this extraordinary man from her, and bore him away to the fountain" (*RV, p. 49*).

Meanwhile, what happens to Lucy in this pivotal scene? Reading the scene in terms of the symbolic opposition outlined above, we find that she merely shuttles from one type of touristic perspective to another. Her desires to break through the tourist's boundary manifest themselves in the purely visual terms of postcards, sightseeing, and souvenirs. Lucy finds herself a passive witness—a sightseer—at the very event that, in the fantasy reading of the scene, purportedly transforms her, or at least initiates her long process of transformation. Even the infliction of the wound, the figure for her sexual initiation, comes across in Forster's prose only as it appears to Lucy herself: as a light tap on the chest, which elicits but a frown and a passing entreating gesture from its recipient. The victim's "message" for Lucy never reaches her

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In a further displacement, the postcards end up stained with the dead man's blood and must be discarded by George in the Arno, while Lucy herself remains unstained, and retreats from her compromising position with George into her characteristic hauteur.

The deeply contradictory nature of the scene bespeaks Forster's "internally distantiated" view of the ideological operations of touristic discourse. Unable to free himself from the system of tourist expectations and experiences, Forster can project an escape for his character, but only at the cost of placing her in a position from which she also appears unable to effect her own salvation. Though in one sense Lucy "causes" the stabbing to occur by breaking the rules about venturing out alone, her little trespasses are dwarfed by the magnitude of public events, and she remains passive before external forces. What is more, the fantasy of fulfillment collapses over the corpse of the victimized Italian: efficiently employing and briskly disposing of the body, Forster appears to participate in the touristic exploitation of Italian life and culture he was so concerned to criticize in "The Story of a Panic." Just at the moment when the exigencies of the narrative take over—when Forster needs an Italian body to fall at the feet of his hero and heroine—the discourse of tourism displays its ideological power, transforming the symbol of authenticity, the Italian male body, into an instrument entirely subsumed in its function within an English plot.[18]

Thus even transgression constantly threatens to become, in Forster's world, a support of the system one longs to transgress; with its built-in means of defusing potential threats, tourism can confirm domestic values even as it offers apparent routes of escape. Despite the nagging double consciousness evinced by the Italian bodies in his texts, Forster continues to seek out and stage moments of anti-touristic vision, often linking them to a character's sensitivity to a particular genius loci.[19] Yet what he cherishes is neither the rehearsed sensitivity of the educated traveler nor the scheduled celebration of accredited tourist attractions. Rather than the perfectly timed and studied tour, in which stimulus and response meet with resounding efficiency, Forster favors the surprises and disappointments along the way: the site that does not deliver its appropriate vision and the tourist unprepared to receive it; the apt quotation that falls flat; the expression that fails to encompass its object. And, as the 1904 story "The Road from Colonus" illustrates, Forster prizes the unpromising, remote, or marginal places off tourism's beaten track as the havens of a valid genius loci.

The story's protagonist, Mr. Lucas, had "forty years ago . . . caught the fever of Hellenism," and is now making his long-dreamed-of tour in

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Greece; "but Athens had been dusty, Delphi wet, Thermopylae flat, and he had listened with amazement and cynicism to the rapturous exclamations of his companions" (*CO,* p. 127). But though the established attractions fail to sustain his enthusiasm, Mr. Lucas succumbs to an unexpected vision in a wayside town not even worthy of Baedeker. He tries to give voice to his experience, but all he can muster are some lukewarm praises of the trees and spring; his companions, however, can quickly summon the requisite superficial enthusiasm: "Mrs. Forman upbraided him for his tepid praises. 'Oh, it is a place in a thousand!' she cried. 'I could live and die here! I really would stop if I had not to be back at Athens!' " (*CO,* p. 132).

Forster's specific target in "The Road from Colonus" is the accepted discourse of English classicism, which, as Forster saw it, threatened to forestall all challenging new experiences. The classical tourist was to follow an itinerary of purportedly foreign sights, holding up the reality of Athens, Delphi, and Thermopylae against the lore of his public-school training; Forster responds to this practice by seizing almost every opportunity to thwart such tourists at the moment of their greatest expectations. In frustrating Mr. Lucas' lifelong aspirations, Forster assails the category of travel experience that suits himself best—that of the English traveler whose class and sex have qualified him for the role of ambassador of empire, heir to the legacy of the *Pax Britannia.* The very education that allows such travelers to comprehend the allusions and savor the historical or mythic resonances of a locality inexorably excludes them from apprehension of, or perhaps *by,* the true genius loci in all its lived immediacy. This recognition leads Forster regularly to grant his moments of vision to those characters *least* accredited by the British classical establishment: sullen boys, ingenues, and simpletons achieve their epiphanies, while dons, tutors, and literati languish among the ranks of the benighted. The classically trained may reach the state of grace only in spite of themselves, in places outside the standard itinerary and outside the familiar language of educated reference and classical allusion.

Such is the vision that overtakes Mr. Lucas in his out-of-the-way town. He finds a local shrine in a hollow tree, dedicated somewhat speciously to the Virgin, "inheritor of the Naiad's and Dryad's joint abode" (*CO,* p. 129). At first reluctant to violate the shrine, Mr. Lucas resolves to capture at least something worth remembering from his trip: "the place shall be mine; I will enter it and possess it." He leaps "almost aggressively on to a stone within"; but, like Lucy Honeychurch, Lucas trespasses into a profounder level of experience than that of his original

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motives and actions. He too falls passive before the mysterious force on which he has encroached. Inside the tree,

> little votive offerings to the presiding Power were fastened on to the bark—tiny arms and legs and eyes in tin, grotesque models of the brain or the heart—all tokens of some recovery of strength or wisdom or love. (*CO*, p. 129)

Captivated by the healing power and feeling a kinship with those who have set these symbols in place, Mr. Lucas—"who, in a brief space of time, [has] discovered not only Greece, but England and all the world and life"—desires "to hang within the tree another votive offering—a little model of an entire man" (*CO*, p. 130). In contrast to the martyred or violated bodies in previous stories, Mr. Lucas imagines for himself a complete and healed body to mark his transfer out of the tourist realm and into meaningful relationship with local natural forces. He recognizes that "he would be a fool as well as a coward if he stirred from the place which brought him happiness and peace," but his daughter and the others, eager to keep on schedule, remove him bodily by tossing him on his mule and lighting out (*CO*, p. 135).

Part Two of the story presents Mr. Lucas living superfluously on, a dour old man in London, under the thumb of his daughter and his hated sister. A package of asphodel bulbs arrives from Athens, wrapped in an old Greek newspaper, and to distract her complaining father, Mr. Lucas' daughter tries translating it. She happens upon an account of a "rural disaster": the hollow tree has fallen, destroying the local inn and killing its few residents, with whom Mr. Lucas had felt a spiritual bond. What is more, the tragedy occurred the very night Mr. Lucas and his party departed from the village. Lucas' daughter breaks off her translation in midsentence: " 'The bodies of Maria Rhomaides, the aged proprietress, and of her daughter, aged forty-six, were easily recognizable, whereas that of her grandson'—oh, the rest is really too horrid . . ." (*CO*, p. 142).

Once more the tourist's encounter with the real is played out upon the indigenous body (with especially destructive force upon the male body). The story weighs the little "entire man" of Lucas' fantasy against the disfigured corpse of the Greek grandson. Reading the newspaper account, Lucas' daughter is convinced that she has saved her father's life by arranging his abduction from the little town; but Forster questions the value of such salvation. In fact, the story hints that the collapse of the shrine may actually be a result of Mr. Lucas' unwilling departure from the site of his epiphany. This interpretation exposes a more profound cultural fantasy than that of "The Story of a Panic": for

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here, rather than piercing the veil of tourists' proprieties to participate in the secret society of cultural authenticity, the traveler attains an imaginary union with the genius loci that is unavailable even to locals, identifying himself with the presiding spirit of the place. Lucas' "entire man" contrasts not only with the mangled victims of the disaster, but with the symbols of human limbs and organs hanging inside the tree, which commemorate only limited instances of healing. Lucas does come to possess the shrine, and to be possessed by it, but this also means that he is responsible for it. According to the terms of his fantasy, Lucas' transformation makes him, like Oedipus at Colonus, a sustaining chthonic force, and when he is removed, his dominion collapses—a result that ironically reinforces the tourist's notion that a place owes its existence to the presence of its visitor.

In "The Road from Colonus" revelation occurs in a marginal area between bona-fide tourist attractions, whereas in other works Forster favors even more remote places. The traveler may go through the motions in Florence, Rome, and Athens, but the truly noteworthy places are those that are "safe from popularity," such as Cnidus, which lies at the end of a "peninsula in Southern Asia Minor, townless, roadless" and evidently forgotten by history.[20] In the essay describing his visit to this "unspoiled" spot, Forster subjects his own persona to the ironies that plague the voyagers of uncharted lands. The trip is long and inconvenient. The Greek ship captains "never will use a chart. They sometimes have one, but it is always locked up in a drawer; for, as they truly say, it is nothing but paper and lines, which are not the least like the sea" (*AH,* pp. 173–74). But the uncharted journey takes longer than the journey by map, and Forster's party arrives late; those who are willing to brave the pouring rain must hurry through the few sights of the town in order to keep on schedule. What is more, the intrepid few must scramble over "the broken edge of the town wall," but they are determined to find objects worthy of their rapture. "The competent observers . . . discovered that the iron clamps were those used in classical times, and that we were straining our ankles over masonry of the best period." Still, the city is by all established measures a disappointment, full of mud, the land "only an outline . . . the sea [running] into the sky" (*AH,* p. 174).

But then, right off schedule, comes the vision so apparently unmerited by the site:

> Who would expect visions from a dripping silhouette, when time after time, the imagination has dwelt in vain desire amidst sun and blue sky and perfect colonnades, and found in them nothing

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> but colonnades and sky and sun? But, that evening, under those weeping clouds, the imagination became creative, taking wings because there was nothing to bid it rise, flying impertinently against all archaeology and sense . . . declaring that it heard voices because it was silent, and saw faces because it was too dark to see. (*AH*, p. 174)

With deft irony, Forster immediately apologizes, "I am ashamed of this outbreak, and will confine myself to facts, such as they are"; and he begins anew, this time in proper guidebook fashion: "Cnidus, then, is only an outline. The high mountains of the peninsula are on the right, and on the left is the great Triopian promontory . . ." (*AH*, p. 174).

Starting over in this deadpan tone, Forster's irony thickens as he speaks for the disappointed tourists. We receive an account of all the vanished attractions that would have made Cnidus a place worth seeing: the destroyed temples of Apollo and Poseidon, the missing shrine of the nymphs, the "ruined house of the Cnidian Aphrodite." There is some consolation, though, seeing "the home of the Goddess who has made Cnidus famous to [the British] . . . the Demeter of Cnidus, whom we hold in the British Museum" (*AH*, p. 175). Forster evokes an image of the Goddess (he does not say her statue), cozily incarcerated amidst other treasures of the empire. There she sits,

> warm and comfortable, in that little recess of hers between the Ephesian Room and the Archaic Room, with the electric light fizzling above her. . . . She is dusted twice a week, and there is a railing in front, with "No Admittance," so that she cannot be touched. And if human industry can find that lost arm of hers, and that broken nose, and human ingenuity can put them on, she shall be made as good as new. (*AH*, p. 175)

A variation on the bodily imagery we have seen in other works, the Goddess' battered form signifies the fragmentation and petrification of the culture over which Demeter once presided. She now resides, between Ephesian and Archaic Rooms, in the absolute static equality of cultural objects, inhabiting that peculiar state of degradation that appears as exaltation—for Demeter's body is culture *museumized*. Like the protagonist of "The Road from Colonus," she outlives her time; but she performs the further ideological labor of embodying, in her London exile, her culture's powerlessness before the British forces on her native soil.

"Cnidus is not yet a seaside resort," writes Forster, "nor am I afraid of making it one by describing my visit to it" (*AH*, p. 173). Yet the writer who celebrates the remote place runs the risk of himself becoming the

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Baedeker for future despoilers. This is what has happened to Miss Raby, the protagonist of "The Eternal Moment" (herself the author of a fashionable novel of the same name), a story that presents Forster's acknowledgment of the author's implication in the process of cultural imperialism in which tourism plays its part. In this story and in the novel *Where Angels Fear to Tread,* Forster's irony exacts payment from his protagonists so harshly that the individual fantasy component essential to many of his other narratives recedes from central importance. What matters now are the unintended consequences of neutral or even charitable acts undertaken by those who do not recognize their contribution to the workings of the "elaborate machinery" through which tourists encounter what they take to be foreign culture.[21]

"The Eternal Moment" tells of Miss Raby's return after many years to Vorta, the Alpine town in which she had set her first novel, which "had made her reputation . . . [and] had also made the reputation of Vorta" (*EM,* p. 83). The town is now riding the crest of tourist prosperity. In describing the process by which Vorta has come to the attention of the tourist, Forster charts the unforeseen effects of Miss Raby's novel through the organs of polite English culture:

> By a strange fate, the book made a great sensation, especially in unimaginative circles. . . . That very year Lady Anstey, Mrs. Heriot, the Marquis of Bamburgh, and many others penetrated to Vorta. . . . They returned enthusiastic. Lady Anstey exhibited her water-colour drawings; Mrs. Heriot, who photographed, wrote an article in *The Strand*; while *The Nineteenth Century* published a long description of the place by the Marquis of Bamburgh, entitled "The Modern Peasant, and his Relations with Roman Catholicism." (*EM,* p. 91)

However "unimaginative" their exploitation of Vorta, it was "thanks to these efforts [that] Vorta became a rising place, and people who liked being off the beaten track went there, and pointed out the way to others" (*EM,* p. 91). And these others to still others: Vorta's preferment by the roaming aristocracy had begun to lead, predictably, to "an inferior class of tourist . . . finding it out" (*EM,* p. 83). By the time Miss Raby returns, Vorta has mobilized to exploit its new status: "The whole population was employed, even down to the little girls, who worried the guests to buy picture postcards and edelweiss. Vorta had taken to the tourist trade" (*EM,* p. 96). The town now sustains a number of hotels whose names suggest the class and nationality of the Northern European tourists to whom they cater: Pension Belle Vue, Hotel de Londres, Pensions Liebig and Lorelei, the Old-England, the Grand Hotel des Alpes.

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Miss Raby looks with horror on the town's transformation, but she comes to acknowledge that, in tourism, the destruction of indigenous culture is never deliberate.

> No villain had done this thing: it was the work of ladies and gentlemen who were good and rich and often clever—who, if they thought about the matter at all, thought that they were conferring a benefit, moral as well as commercial, on any place in which they chose to stop. (*EM*, p. 97)

Here is the fatally unimaginative attitude of the tourists toward their hosts, a failure to confront the effects of their presence and of the imposition of their values. For all her insight, however, Miss Raby is not exempt from this analysis. Vorta's new dispensation is ultimately traceable to the fleeting personal incident that inspired her novel twenty years earlier: a porter named Feo Ginori had made protestations of love to her, from which she had very properly fled, screaming, though secretly enjoying his attentions. She has often jokingly retold the story of their encounter, relishing the opportunity it gives her to display her unconventionality, but she discovers during the course of the story that the impetuous youth she remembers has since become concierge of the plushest of the hotels. When she sees him, his body bears witness to the changes Vorta had undergone. Vorta's economic windfall has been obtained at the cost of its cultural vigor—Feo is "fat, perspiring, and unattractive" (*EM*, p. 110)—and the superficial polish and rapid development of the town is written out in his "greasy stoutness, his big black kiss-curl, his waxed moustache, [and] his chin which was dividing and propagating itself like some primitive form of life" (*EM*, p. 103). Feo is also obsequiously grateful for his share of the wealth: as he puts it, "after the lady's book, foreigners come, hotels are built, we all grow richer. When I first came here, I was a common ignorant porter who carried luggage over the passes; I worked, I found opportunities, I was pleasing to the visitors—and now!" (*EM*, p. 109).

Witnessing the change that has come over Feo and the town, Miss Raby feels "the sadness of an unskillful demiurge, who makes a world and beholds that it is bad" (*EM*, p. 103). She attempts to penetrate Feo's bland, officious shell, but she appears to him now as merely an "ugly, withered, elderly woman" who menaces his position by importunately reminding him of their earlier association (*EM*, p. 110). Miss Raby's decrepitude expresses the truth hidden by the fat glossiness of the best hotel's concierge. Her conduct represents an embarrassing breach of touristic relations, and the story ends with an accord between Feo and her companion Colonel Leyland that parodies the kind of unspoken

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understanding of alien culture we have seen Forster's anti-tourists previously seek. Here, by tacitly defining her conduct as senile or insane, the two men agree to repair the breach Miss Raby has caused.

> Much as Colonel Leyland disliked touching people he took Feo by the arm, and then quickly raised his finger to his forehead. "Exactly, sir," whispered the concierge. "Of course we understand—Oh, thank you, sir, thank you very much: thank you very much indeed!" (*EM,* p. 112)

Before she goes, Miss Raby attempts to atone for what she has wrought upon Vorta by making the unusual request that Feo give her his son to raise; the boy will, she hopes, be the start of a new understanding between poor and rich, between Vorta and its clientele. The demiurge wishes to repopulate her creation with a new generation that will unlearn the "stupidity" of the inter-class and international relationships preserved by tourism; "as long as the stupidity exists . . . the whole of our civilization is vain" (*EM,* p. 109). But Miss Raby's efforts must be futile, and they only alienate her further from the affronted Feo and Leyland. Had she been able to reform him, the boy would have represented the consummation of her twenty-year-old love for Feo; instead, her contact with Feo has produced a warped kind of offspring—her book and the sterile, fake culture of the tourist resort.

Miss Raby is a character of depth and imagination who nevertheless shares in the unimaginativeness of the system she has unwittingly promoted; in this she resembles Philip Herriton, the reluctant hero of *Where Angels Fear to Tread.* The possibility of positive commerce between two worlds is embodied, here as in "The Eternal Moment," in a child, and the question of the child's future is the question of cultural legacy as well. The child belongs to Lilia, an unmanageable young widow whose Sawston in-laws have her packed off on a protracted tour of Italy, and Gino, the younger Italian man whom she rashly marries. She takes too literally Philip Herriton's anti-touristic advice:

> Remember . . . that it is only by going off the beaten track that you get to know the country. See the little towns. . . . And don't, let me beg you, go with that awful tourist idea that Italy's only a museum of antiquities and art. Love and understand the Italians, for the people are more marvellous than the land.[22]

Lilia seems disinclined to love, understand, and leave, as even Philip takes for granted she must do; she marries Gino and dies in childbirth. At their mother's instigation, Philip and his grim Low Church sister Harriet try to rescue the child for a proper English upbringing. When

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attempts to purchase the baby fail, Harriet resorts to kidnapping, but the Herritons are defeated by their own devices: their absconding carriage overturns and the infant is killed.

Tourism appears to figure only marginally in the novel, since we see little of Lilia on her travels, but tourist attitudes and institutions play a vital role in the Herritons' thwarted mission. Philip has founded much of his self-image on his experience of Italy, and on his imaginative superiority to the run-of-the-mill tourist; he is what another unfortunate Forster character calls himself, the *Inglese Italianato*.[23] Yet his enthusiasm for the country is not proof against his revulsion when he learns that Gino is not, as Lilia had intimated, a member of the old Italian nobility, but merely the son of a dentist in a provincial town.

> A dentist! A dentist at Monteriano. A dentist in fairyland! False teeth and laughing gas and the tilting chair at a place which knew the Etruscan League, and the Pax Romana, and Alaric himself, and the Countess Matilda, and the Middle Ages, all fighting and holiness, and the Renaissance, all fighting and beauty! He thought of Lilia no longer. He was anxious for himself; he feared that Romance might die. (*WA*, p. 26)

Philip runs hard up against the banal, contemporary existence of Italy; he is "in love with a Baedeker Italy [but afraid] of the unmediated reality that Gino represents."[24] The revelation of Gino's origins, which would occasion some class-anxiety at home, here troubles Philip on what asks to be called a more philosophical level: the presence of dentists means the absence of Romance, and he is in peril of losing his epistemological footing. Even the sensitive tourist—and Philip is certainly that—is accustomed to regard the visited place as the setting for his own ideals, as created, to a large extent, for his own use. For Forster, the "Baedeker Italy" is a fiction perpetuated by the unimaginative. Actual Italian life comes to be defined in terms either of local color or of a few necessary services for the Northern tourist. *Baedeker's Northern Italy* of 1899 (the edition Forster himself probably carried) states that it means to render its Northern European client

> as independent as possible of the services of guides and valets-de-place. . . . The Handbook will also, it is hoped, be a means of saving the traveller many a trial of temper; for there are few countries where the patience is more severely taxed than in some parts of Italy.[25]

Philip's capacity for imagination makes him ultimately capable of salvation from Sawston and from his own delusions. Forster conveys this capacity early in the novel by revealing, interestingly enough,

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Philip's sensitivity to Baedeker at a level transcending the merely pragmatic: Philip's imagination breathes life into the guidebook's dry accounts.[26] In a justly famous passage of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* we watch Philip's mother searching the library for information necessary for the campaign she prepares to mount against Monteriano. "She looked up the place in 'Childe Harold,' but Byron had not been there. Nor did Mark Twain visit it in the 'Tramp Abroad.' The resources of literature were exhausted." Then she remembers to check Philip's copy of Baedeker, opens it "for the first time in her life," and comes upon Forster's well-known mock-Baedeker description, but all she finds is historical data and directions like "the traveller will proceed direct from the Siena gate to the Collegiate Church of Santa Deodata, and inspect (5th chapel on the right) the charming Frescoes . . ." (*WA*, p. 16–17). "Not one to detect the hidden charms of Baedeker," Mrs. Herriton remains unimpressed, "whereas Philip could never read 'The view from the Rocca (small gratuity) is finest at sunset' without a catching at the heart" (*WA*, p. 16–17).

The paradox of Philip's position is that, like Miss Raby, he is imaginative within what Forster regards as the wholly unimaginative conventions of tourism; it is heavily ironic that he should be so moved by the Baedeker passage about the view from the Rocca, which interrupts itself to offer helpful financial advice for procuring the view.[27] Philip's belief that he is imaginatively superior to the average tourist (and in a limited sense he is right) is not enough to exempt him from convention. In terms reminiscent of Lucy Honeychurch, Philip has rejected the possibility that anything might happen to him, or that he might make anything happen, in either foreign or domestic realms. He considers himself "fated to pass through the world without colliding with it or moving it," one to whom life "is just a spectacle," but he is nevertheless made a useful instrument in the Sawston siege of Monteriano (*WA*, p. 151).

In "The Eternal Moment," Forster had made Miss Raby "ugly [and] withered" to express the corruption at the heart of the new Vorta that she had helped to create; in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* the bodies of the Sawston representatives also suffer for the sins committed against Monteriano. Forster makes the dull-witted Harriet endure a variety of minor physical ailments throughout the novel—someone steps on her corns, she gets soot in her eyes, and so on. But the characters with more initial promise, like Philip's and Lilia's companion Caroline Abbott, will bear greater burdens for their complicity in the Sawston onslaught. Philip suffers a broken arm in the carriage accident, followed by a

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horrifying instance of true contact with the alien—the grief-stricken Gino tortures him almost to death. Caroline saves his life, but at the end of the novel she brings on his final degradation as she confesses her own to him. Impressed by her independence, Philip begins romanticizing about her, imagining her as a sustaining goddess and working himself up to being in love with her. "He had reached love by the spiritual path" (*WA*, p. 176); but just then she reveals that she has all along been longing for Gino in a most unspiritual fashion. "I mean it crudely," she sobs, "you know what I mean" (*WA*, p. 181).

Philip thinks of Caroline's desire at first in classical terms that suggest the inherently contradictory attitude of the Northern tourist: "He smiled bitterly at the thought of [Gino and Caroline] together. Here was the cruel antique malice of the gods, such as they once sent forth against Pasiphae. Centuries of aspiration and culture—and the world could not escape it" (*WA*, p. 182). Pasiphae desired a creature that was both god and beast; Philip has idealized a Baedeker Italy while reviling the actual one; Caroline, who had shared Harriet's evangelicalism, is oppressed by physical desire. In the end Philip revises his impression of Caroline and her love, exchanging the story of Pasiphae's cruel fate for the myth of Endymion. Now he sees her as "a goddess to the end," but one capable of human love: "for her no love could be degrading: she stood outside all degradation. This episode, which she thought so sordid, and which was so tragic for him, remained supremely beautiful" (*WA*, p. 184).

What the dweller in the tourist world cannot escape time and again in Forster's work is the materiality of culture, the mundane and unaesthetic living body on which tourists construct their fantasies. In Forster's cultural allegories, the tourist (however anti-touristic his sympathies) continually commits what Forster calls in another story "the sin against the body," condemning it to bear the burden for his unimaginative exploitation.[28] From the initial projection of a utopian alien body in "The Story of a Panic" to that projection's ultimate coming-home-to-roost in the fates of Miss Raby, Philip Herriton, and Caroline Abbott, we have seen Forster repeatedly enacting a "missed encounter with the real."[29]

After completing his early work, Forster was apt to feel that a European scope had been exhausted in the course of his search for intransigent cultural authenticity. In his "second career" as a writer, the decade from the beginning of World War I to the publication of his guidebook to Alexandria and *A Passage to India*, he looks resolutely eastward. Yet Forster remained loyal to the ideal of transgressing the

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accepted boundaries around experience, still resolutely investigating the remote place, the unexpected vision, the hidden store of authenticity, for their critical potential with regard to the status quo; as the narrator of *A Passage to India* remarks, "Life never gives us what we want at the moment we consider appropriate. Adventures do occur, but not punctually."[30] Adela Quested's desire to see the "real India" carries sexual overtones reminiscent of those found in Lucy Honeychurch's situation, and it brings her into a contact with the alien that takes the form of another projected, liberating rape (which, like other Forster heroines, she both desires and fears). She flees madly through some cactus—a detail that has immediate and familiar results, for it allows Forster to linger over the vision of her body as it lies tortured by a thousand penetrations.

> Adela lay for several days in the McBrydes' bungalow. She had been touched by the sun, also hundreds of cactus spines had to be picked out of her flesh. Hour after hour Miss Derek and Mrs. McBryde examined her through magnifying glasses, always coming on fresh colonies, tiny hairs that might snap off and be drawn into the blood if they were neglected. She lay passive beneath their fingers, which developed the shock that had begun in the cave. . . . Everything now was transferred to the surface of her body, which began to avenge itself . . . . (*PI*, p. 193)

In *Alexandria: A History and a Guide*, Forster's most obvious contribution to tourist discourse, many of the anti-tourist strategies of the earlier fiction reappear. In ways that recall Ruskin's engagement with Murray and the Murray-carrying tourist, Forster seems determined to wrest the guidebook genre away from its established use by providing a sort of anti-Baedeker—a guide that is not a guide, at least as conventionally understood. An unpromising, halfway place, not quite a tourist center, Alexandria suits this purpose well. Of nearly all its chief attractions not even a trace remains: Lighthouse, Ptolemaic Palaces, Library, Temples—Forster relentlessly emphasizes the utter emptiness of the present sites of past glories. "On this spot once arose a stupendous temple," Forster writes, but "Grit and gravel have taken its place to-day" (*AHG*, pp. 175–77). Nor is Alexandria definitively either European or Asian, and it offers neither the marketable grandiosity of Paris, Rome, and Athens, nor the natural splendor of the German, Alpine, or Sicilian settings cherished by the tourist industry. Forster encourages random movement, anathema to Baedeker and company: "The best way of seeing [the Turkish Town section] is to wander aimlessly about" (*AHG*, p. 134). But most of all, Forster persistently

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seeks to link the tourist's experience to history, treating contemporary Alexandria less as an aesthetic object of contemplation than as the product of historical change. At its outset, Forster describes the way the arrangement of his book suits its avowed aim:

> The "History" is written in short sections, and at the end of each section are references to the second part—the "Guide." *On these references the chief utility of the book depends,* so the reader is begged to take special note of them. They may help him to link the present and the past. (*AHG,* p. xx, Forster's emphasis)

Yet as we have seen, between Forster and the places and cultures he sought there consistently intruded not only that wall of prior touristic discourse that had so troubled Ruskin, but also the recognition that one was always, so to speak, already written into the script of tourism oneself. This recognition takes form in his work in frequent and rather ghastly embodiments of false liberation—the Philip Herritons, Cecil Vyses, Eleanor Lavishes, and Miss Rabys of his fictional landscape, those who derive their social capital from their posture of superiority to tourism and its institutions. They represent Forster's implicit acknowledgment that, personal maneuvers notwithstanding, one remains "a tourist like every other tourist."[31] Forster had to reject "their laboured defiance of the proprieties, their laborious attempts at self-emancipation," their self-congratulation; and his work investigating tourism has the considerable merit of exhibiting the inherent strains of the discourse of tourism and of probing the author's complicity in the system he derides.[32] This investigation into tourism led Forster to an unformulated theory of culture as inextricable from the complex history of everyday lives lived in one place, as nearly unintelligible to the casual, or even to the studied, observer. It was a notion of great currency in the early twentieth century. Cut off from what they were tempted nostalgically to regard as the meaningfully "rooted" cultures of traditional, preindustrial Europe, observers were apt to feel, as Paul Fussell has put it, that in modernity "we are all tourists now, and there is no escape." Fully inhabiting the tourist world, Forster's work embodies the cultural contradictions of the peculiarly modern language of tourism and its discontents.

[1] E. M. Forster, *Alexandria: A History and a Guide* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1961), p. xv. Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text as *AHG.*

[2] "Vacations" [signed: A Cynic], *Cornhill Magazine* (Aug. 1869), p. 209; rpt.

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in Leslie Stephen, *Men, Books, and Mountains* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1956), pp. 168–81.

[3] Edward Mendelson, "Baedeker's Universe," *Yale Review* (Spring 1985), p. 389.

[4] This information can be found in the introduction to any *Baedeker's Italy* of the period; my source is a 1909 edition, and the timetable is on page xi.

[5] The phrase "invaluable and exasperating" is Forster's in *The Lucy Novels: Early Sketches for* A Room with a View, ed. Oliver Stallybrass (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), p. 22. Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text as *LN*. Ruskin's counsel is from *Mornings in Florence: Being Simple Studies in Christian Art for English Travellers*, 3rd ed. (Sunnyside, Orpington, Kent: George Allen, 1889), p. 3. Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text as *MF*.

[6] Forster, *The Lucy Novels*, p. 2. Some critics have commented on Forster's anti-tourist satire; see John Colmer's *E. M. Forster: The Personal Voice* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 149.

[7] Here I am nearly paraphrasing Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1981), p. 35.

[8] Louis Althusser, "A Letter on Art," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), pp. 222–23.

[9] Of course, Forster was traveling with his mother on spending money inherited from his great-aunt. For a description of the Italian tour, see P. N. Furbank, *E. M. Forster: A Life* (New York: Harcourt, 1978), pp. 24, 80–96.

[10] See Mary Lago and P. N. Furbank, eds., *Selected Letters of E. M. Forster* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 1983), I, 52.

[11] *Ibid.*, I, 48.

[12] For interpretations of the story as wish fulfillment, see Wilfred Stone, *The Cave and the Mountain* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 130–37, and John Colmer, *E. M. Forster: The Personal Voice*, pp. 25–32.

[13] Forster, "The Story of a Panic," in *The Celestial Omnibus and Other Stories* (rpt. New York: Random House, 1976), p. 3. Subsequent references to this volume are cited parenthetically in the text as *CO*.

[14] See Stone, *The Cave and the Mountain*, p. 135.

[15] See, for example, *ibid.*, p. 137.

[16] Barbara Rosecrance, *Forster's Narrative Vision* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1982), p. 92.

[17] E. M. Forster, *A Room with a View* (rpt. New York: Random House, n.d.), p. 47; subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text as *RV*.

[18] The plot, as it turns out, is an Italian one for English consumption: Miss Lavish romanticizes the Italian figures, transforming the scene into a lover's triangle in her local color/adventure novel *Under a Loggia*. This is of course the book that appears in the garden at Windy Corner (under the pseudonym Joseph Emery Prank) to spur George and Lucy's courtship with its sensationalized account of their own previous encounters. See Forster, *Room with a View*, pp. 172–87.

[19] Colmer believes that John Addington Symonds may have influenced Forster in this regard; see Colmer, *E. M. Forster: The Personal Voice*, p. 26.

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[20] E. M. Forster, "Cnidus," in *Abinger Harvest* (New York: Harcourt, 1964), pp. 173–78. Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text as *AH*.

[21] E. M. Forster, *The Eternal Moment and Other Stories* (New York: Harcourt, 1928), p. 88. Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text as *EM*.

[22] E. M. Forster, *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (New York: Random House, 1920), pp. 3–4. Subsequent references are cited parenthetically as *WA*.

[23] Cecil Vyse, in *A Room with a View,* celebrates himself in these terms; see *A Room with a View,* p. 112.

[24] Stone, *The Cave and the Mountain,* p. 165.

[25] See *Baedeker's Northern Italy,* 11th remodeled edition (Leipsig: Karl Baedeker, 1899), p. v.

[26] David I. Joseph considers the Baedeker in Forster's work as a kind of litmus test for characters; see *The Art of Rearrangement: E. M. Forster's* Abinger Harvest (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1964), p. 42.

[27] This is what Edward Mendelson calls "the Baedeker parenthesis," a technique used by the guidebook for yoking picturesque and prosaic aspects of the tour together. See Mendelson, "Baedeker's Universe," p. 397.

[28] See E. M. Forster, "The Machine Stops," in *The Eternal Moment and Other Stories,* p. 36.

[29] The quotation is loosely adapted from Lacan; see Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (New York: Norton, 1981), p. 53.

[30] E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India* (New York: Harcourt, 1924; rpt. 1952), p. 25. Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text as *PI*.

[31] Alan Brien, "Tourist Angst," *Spectator,* July 31, 1959, p. 33. Quoted by Paul Fussell in *Abroad: British Literary Traveling between the Wars* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1980), p. 49. The quotation "We are all tourists now" is from the same page.

[32] Forster, *The Lucy Novels,* p. 95.

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The "Repeat in History": Canto XXVI and Greece's Asia Minor Disaster

David Roessel

In 1927, Ezra Pound sent his father the following outline of his long work in progress:

> 1. Rather like, or unlike subject for response and counter response in fugue.
> A.A. Live man goes down to world of Dead.
> C.B. The "repeat in history".
> B.C. the 'magic moment' or moment of metamorphosis, burst thru from quotidien into 'divine permanent world'. Gods, etc.[1]

The musical schema was probably not part of Pound's intention when he began *The Cantos*.[2] It is also questionable whether such a structure remains in effect for the *Cantos* composed after 1929.[3] But at the very least Pound's thoughts about his poem in 1927 should hold true for the section published in 1928, *A Draft of The Cantos, 17–27*. Pound's outline, then, encourages an analysis of the "repeat in history" in his postwar work.

Pound said in 1915 that "one seems to be able to find modern civilization in its simplest elements in the Renaissance."[4] The idea that the Renaissance, especially the quattrocento, was a distant mirror for the present gained importance for Pound after World War I.[5] If contemporary events are viewed as repeats of Renaissance history, then references to the Renaissance become an oblique way of commenting on the postwar world. Pound's method of focusing on a current issue by directing attention to a similar event in the past is particularly important in Canto XXVI, where the fate of Constantinople is used as a precursor for the Asia Minor disaster of 1922.

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The central portion of Canto XXVI concerns the visit of the Greek Emperor John VIII to the West in 1438.

> And that year ('38) they came here
> Jan. 2. The Marquis of Ferrara,
> mainly to see the Greek Emperor,
> To take him down the canal to his house,
> And with the Emperor came the archbishops:
> The Archbishop of Morea Lower
> And the Archbishop of Sardis
> And the Bishops of Lacedaemon and of Mytilene,
> Of Rhodos, of Modon Brandos,
> And the Archbishops of Athens, Corinth, and of Trebizond,
> The chief secretary and the stonolifex.
>
> XXVI/123[6]

John needed help against the Turks, who had already conquered a large part of Byzantine territory and were threatening Constantinople.[7] In fact, the dioceses of several of the clerics who traveled with John were already in foreign hands. The Turks ruled Sardis and Lampsacus (XXVI/124), while Rhodes, Cyprus (XXVI/124), and Athens had been in the hands of the Frankish Crusaders for over a century.

The price for Western aid was a union of the Orthodox and Catholic churches. Pound alludes to the most contentious point in the discussions about union, the derivation of the Holy Ghost:

> And in February they all packed off
> To Ferrara to decide on the Holy ghost
> And as to the which begat the what in the Trinity.—
> Gemisto and the Stonolifex,
> And you would have bust your bum laughing
> To see the hats and beards of those Greeks.
>
> XXVI/123–24

A document of union, which included Eastern acceptance of the primacy of the papacy, was signed on July 6, 1439. In return, Pope Eugenius IV promised John military aid in the form of a crusade.

The Orthodox faithful were not impressed with the tangible benefits of the union of the churches. John and the bishops who signed the document of union were received as traitors and heretics. The internal dissension only further weakened Byzantium, while the crusade barely reached the Black Sea before it was stopped. After that effort, the West left Byzantium to fend for itself. It fell to the Turks in 1453.

Pound heightens the sense of failure surrounding John's visit to the West by enclosing it within two references to the Turkish conquest, both of which contain hints that Western opposition to the Turks was not

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monolithic. The first deals with the release of Matteo da Pasti by the Venetians.[8] Pasti was sent by Sigismondo Malatesta to paint a picture of the Turkish ruler and carried as a present a copy of *De Re Militare* of Valturio. The subject matter of the volume raised the suspicion of the Venetians, who detained Pasti. Near the beginning of the Canto XXVI, Pound uses the incident.

"Relaxetur!"
11th. December 1461: that Pasti be let out
with a caveat
"caveat ire ad Turchum, that he stay out of
Constantinople
"if he hold dear our government's pleasure.
"The book will be retained by the council
(the book being Valturio's "Re Militari")
XXVI/121

The involvement of Malatesta with Pasti links this passage with other incidents of intrigue in the Canto.

The other mention of the Turkish conquest follows almost immediately after the last reference to the conference on union, whose purpose was to prevent a Turkish victory:

"Bishops of Lampsacus and Cyprus
"And other fifty lords bishops
that are the church of the orient."
XXVI/124

After an interval of four lines, Pound quotes a treaty signed by the Venetians and the Turks on April 18, 1453.

"Venetians may stand, come, depart with their families
Free by land, free by sea
in their galleys,
Ships, boats, and with merchandise.
2% on what's actually sold. No tax above that.
Year 6962 of the world
18th. April, in Constantinople."
XXVI/125

The rapidity with which the poem shifts from the conference to this treaty highlights the failure of John's effort.

The great conference which was to solve all the problems between the Greek East and the Latin West has its modern counterpart in the peace conference at Versailles in 1919. The Greek prime minister Eleftherios Venizelos, led a delegation of Greeks to Paris in the hopes of obtaining the support of the Allied Powers for Greek claims upon Turkish territory.[9] Specifically, Venizelos asked for the "return" of

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Eastern Thrace, Asia Minor, and Constantinople along with the Italian-ruled Dodecanese and British-held Cyprus. The fate of the Greeks of Trebizond was also raised. So there is a substantial overlap between Pound's list of Greek clergy and contemporary Greek concerns. The negotiations came very close to meeting all of Greece's wishes. She obtained part of Thrace and an area of Asia Minor around Smyrna. A separate agreement stipulated that Greece would receive the Dodecanese and Cyprus within fifteen years. Constantinople and the Straits were made an International Zone, but there was a chance the area would revert to Greece in the future. The Treaty of Sèvres in 1920 held out the hope that the verdict of 1453 would be reversed and the Byzantine Empire re-created. This notion was expressed by supporters of the Greeks in English newspapers and magazines.[10] The name of the Greek King in 1921, Constantine, strengthened the connection. The last emperor of Byzantium, Constantine XI, "according to a widely believed legend, lay in an enchanted sleep waiting for the hour he should wake, break with his sword the chain of slavery, and implant the cross on the dome of St. Sophia."[11] The fact that the modern Constantine was exiled in 1917 on the same day, May 29, on which the Byzantine Constantine died only increased the identification. When King Constantine returned from exile in late 1920, many Greeks saw it as the fulfillment of the legend.

But just as in 1438, there was a price for Western support of Greek aspirations. Greece remained neutral during the first years of the war. The king, Constantine, was married to a German and favored the Axis. Venizelos, the prime minister, advocated the cause of the Entente. In 1915 Venizelos set up a separate government in Thessalonica. In 1917, with French and British assistance, he returned to Athens, exiled the king, and placed Constantine's son, Alexander, on the throne. This led to Greece's entry into the war. The success of Greece at Versailles was to a large degree due to the pro-Allied position of Venizelos.

Like John VIII, Venizelos returned from his Western conference with an agreement of Western support for Greece. And like John, he was quickly rejected by the populace. In the elections of November 1920, the Royalists won in a landslide. King Alexander had died unexpectedly, and the new government promptly held a referendum to recall the exiled Constantine to the vacant throne. Before the vote, the Allies sent messages to Athens warning that Constantine's return would be received with hostility.[12] The warnings went unheeded and the referendum passed overwhelmingly. Venizelos went into exile. Just as Greece was preparing to fight the Nationalist Turks in Asia Minor, it

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had alienated much of its support in Western Europe. With internal dissension and no foreign help, the Greeks lost badly. In 1922, the Turks regained all of Asia Minor, crossed into Thrace, and entered Constantinople for the second time. Instead of reversing 1453, 1922 simply repeated it.

While the Greco-Turkish war was fought on the battlefields of Asia Minor, propaganda duels between supporters of the two sides occurred in the pages of British newspapers and magazines. Both the Greek massacre of Turks in Smyrna in 1919 and the subsequent Turkish massacre of Greeks and Armenians in the same city in 1922 received a great deal of press. Pound undoubtedly read some of this material. Much was made by Greek supporters of the poetic justice of restoring Greece as the centennial of Byron's death approached.[13] The image of Byron's funeral in Canto XVI/70 may reflect this contemporary interest. The prominence of 1453 and the idea of the repetition of history in postwar discussions of the fate of Greece provides the background to the conference of union in 1438 as the forerunner to a contemporary repeat of it in Canto XXVI.

One crucial difference separated the two Greek losses. The Greek refugees who fled Anatolia and Thrace were on the whole poor peasants. They would not cause a Renaissance as had the learned men of Byzantium. But Pound had already allocated to himself the role of starting a rebirth in learning. So it is not surprising, and not entirely anachronistic, that Canto XXVI begins with the young Pound in Venice (XXVI/121). He has his place in this repeat of history.

By concentrating on the conference of 1438 and Western relations with the Turks, Canto XXVI suggests that the Asia Minor disaster of 1922 resulted from Greek dissension and Western duplicity. This is not at all surprising, for the same opinion was expressed by Ernest Hemingway. Hemingway went to Constantinople as a correspondent for the *Toronto Star* in late September 1922.[14] He arrived after the fighting in the Greco-Turkish War had stopped, a fact he did not always admit to later.[15] Hemingway laid the blame for the Greek defeat on their internal problems. In his dispatch on November 3, 1922, he reported the words of one Captain Withal, who had observed the Anatolian campaign.

> "When Constantine came into power all the officers of the army in the field were suddenly scrapped, from the commander-in-chief down to the platoon commanders. These officers, many of them been promoted from the ranks, were good soldiers and splendid leaders. They were removed and their places filled with

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> new officers of the Tino [Constantine] party, most of whom had spent the war in Switzerland or Germany and had never fired a shot. That caused a complete breakdown of the army and was responsible for the Greek defeat."
>
> Captain Withal told me how artillery officers who had no experience at all took command of batteries and massacred their own infantry.[16]

In Hemingway's view, the gross incompetence of Greek leaders caused the revolt of the army in late 1922, after which six of the Constantinian officers were summarily executed. He used this incident in a vignette for *In Our Time,* explaining to Pound in a letter dated August 5, 1923, that "the refugees leave Thrace, due to the Greek ministers, who are shot."[17] In Hemingway's writing on the Greco-Turkish War, Greeks kill Greeks as often, if not more, than they kill Turks.

While at Constantinople, Hemingway also observed the duplicitous behavior of the French. Although they had agreed to the treaty granting Greece territory in Thrace and Asia Minor, the French became concerned that England's influence on Greece was too great. So the French began to aid the Nationalist Turks under Mustapha Kemal. In his dispatch dated October 23, 1922, Hemingway wrote:

> Just now the Turkish Nationalists, who are the same as the Kemalists, are under French influence. This came about in a perfectly simple away. About two years ago Mustapha Kemal Pasha was denounced by the Earl of Balfour as a common bandit. He was, speaking in the broadest sense, for sale to the highest bidder. The French bought him. They supplied him with arms, ammunition, and money. In return, it is rumored they received certain oil concessions in Asia Minor.[18]

Pound and Hemingway were close in the early 1920s. They took a walking trip through northern Italy three months after Hemingway's return from Constantinople.[19] So if Pound did not have the opportunity to read Hemingway's dispatches, he would have heard Hemingway's views by word of mouth. Pound certainly read the three vignettes about the Greeks contained in the 1923 edition of *In Our Time.* Since Hemingway was a friend and, to a degree, an eyewitness, Pound would give credence to his views. Canto XXVI reflects Hemingway's influence, for Pound selects slices of fifteenth-century history which highlight the same behavior described by Hemingway in his dispatches. The closeness between Hemingway's point of view and Canto XXVI raises the possibility that Pound chose those particular slices because they best recalled the repeat of which they were the forerunners.

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Two passages from Canto XXIII support the thesis that Pound both incorporated Hemingway's view of Greece's problems in his work and used those problems as examples of the repeat in history. Near the opening of the Canto, Pound records Pletho's opinion that the union of the churches will not rescue Byzantium, but a wall across the Peloponnesus might save some of it.

Gemisto:
"Never with this religion
"Will you make men of the greeks.
"But build wall across Peloponnesus
"And organize, and . . .
damn these Eyetalian barbarians."
XXIII/107

This passage foreshadows the fuller comparison of fifteenth-century Byzantium and modern Greece in Canto XXVI. For after the loss of Asia Minor, the Greek strategy was to regroup in Thrace and hold the line at the Hellespont. Hemingway reported on October 4, 1922: "Thrace, an unproductive barren country, is the key to the present situation. To the reorganized Greek government, Thrace is another Marne, where a stand must be made or the end of greater Greece admitted."[20]

A stand was not made, either at the Peloponnesus in the fifteenth century or in Thrace in the twentieth. In both cases, there was an end to greater Greece.

The second passage comes at the very end of Canto XXIII:

And that was when Troy was down, all right,
superbo Ilion . . .
And they were sailing along
Sitting in the stern-sheets,
Under the lee of an island
And the wind drifting off from the island.
"Tet, tet. . .
what is it?" said Anchises.
"Tethnéké," said the helmsman, "I think they
"are howling because Adonis died virgin."
"Huh! Tet. . ." said Anchises,
"well, they've made a bloody mess of that city."
"King Otreus, of Phrygia,
"that king is my father."
XXIII/109

One of the most tragic events in the Greco-Turkish War was the destruction of Smyrna when the Turks retook the city in September

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1922. Hemingway arrived in the Levant after the event, but the eyewitness accounts which he heard made a lasting impression. Hemingway did not publish an account of the destruction of Smyrna until "On the Quai at Smyrna" appeared at the front of the 1930 edition of *In Our Time*. Whether he wrote an early draft which he let Pound read or he simply recounted what he had heard, it would appear Pound had learned from Hemingway about Smyrna. "On the Quai at Smyrna" starts: "The strange thing was, he said, how they screamed every night at midnight. I do not know why they screamed at that time. We were in the harbor and they were all on the pier and at midnight they started screaming." The speaker is a British captain, so his vessel is neutral in the war. (See Pound, XXVI/121: " 'Our galleys were strictly neutral / And sent there for neutrality.' ") The Allied ships would go in to the pier to rescue as many refugees as they could. Once they were told by the Turks to stop.

> "You remember when they ordered us not to come in to take off any more? I had the wind up when we came in that morning. He had any amount of batteries and could have blown us out of the water. We were going to come in, run along the pier, let go the front and rear anchors and then shell the Turkish quarter of the town. They would have blown us out of the water but we would have blown the town simply to hell. . . . It would have been a hell of a mess."[21]

The shared elements in Canto XXIII and "On the Quai at Smyrna" are striking—the screaming, the wind, and the "mess." The most plausible explanation for the similarity is a shared source, the story about Smyrna which Hemingway heard in Constantinople. In Canto XXIII the mention of Phrygia, a country in western Asia Minor, and the cult of Adonis, which is associated with the same area, increases the connection. An article in *New Europe* in 1919 had claimed that the inhabitants of Asia Minor were culturally Greek but racially Anatolian or "Phrygians."[22] Further, the fall of Troy also has a connection to Hemingway and the Asia Minor disaster. On November 3, 1922, Hemingway said of the withdrawal of Greek soldiers from Thrace, "They are the last of the glory that was Greece. This is the end of their second siege of Troy."[23]

Just as he did with the fall of Byzantium and the Asia Minor disaster, Pound here uses the repeat in history to comment obliquely on the bloody mess that was made of Smyrna. In both Canto XXVI and Canto XXIII he builds on analogies between the past and the present

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which were in the air at the time and expects the reader to supply the missing contemporary element.

Canto XXVI contains another example of the oblique repeat in history:

> . . . 8 barrels wine, to Henry of Inghilterra . . .
> Tin, serges, amber to go by us to the Levant,
> Corfu, and above Corfu . . .
>
> XXVI/122

C. F. Terrell links the mention of Corfu to the occupation of that island by the Norman Robert Guiscard in 1081 and its subsequent recapture by the Venetians.[24] Guiscard threatened the island again in 1084, but was unsuccessful. He died before he could undertake another expedition. Terrell's observation is supported by the appearance of Domenico Selvo, who was doge during Guiscard's attacks, in the next sequence. Selvo was removed from office because of a severe naval defeat off Corfu in 1084. This information is needed to comprehend the passage.

But to understand the passage fully, one must also know that the island of Corfu was big news in 1923. After an Italian diplomat had been mysteriously murdered on the Greek-Albanian border, Mussolini ordered Italian troops to occupy Corfu until Greece fulfilled certain demands of money and protocol.[25] His decision was based in part on the weakened state of Greece after its defeat in Asia Minor the previous year. On August 31 Italy seized the island. Mussolini would have been content to hold it indefinitely if he had been allowed. But Greece appealed to the League of Nations, who determined that, although the murderers were still unknown, Greece should pay Italy a sum of fifty million lire. Greece reluctantly agreed and Italian troops left the island on September 27.

Mussolini's brief occupation of the island and his designs on Albania became a repeat of Guiscard's brief occupation of Corfu and his designs on Dyrrachium and Byzantium. Mussolini's action was common knowledge, indeed it would probably be the first thing a person thought of when he saw the word Corfu in the years following 1923. So, as with the events discussed above, Pound thought that direct mention of the contemporary event was unnecessary. But the care with which Pound chooses a past that mirrors the present makes such a reference unnecessary.

As Pound told his father, the "repeat in history" plays an important role in Canto XXVI. But an understanding of how it works demands a knowledge of ideas current after World War I. The oblique repeat of

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history is one more way in which *The Cantos* are "a poem including history."

[1] *Selected Letters of Ezra Pound, 1909–1941,* ed. D. D. Paige (New York: New Directions, 1971), p. 210.

[2] Ronald Bush, *The Origin of Ezra Pound's Cantos* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1978), p. 9.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[4] Ezra Pound, *The New Age,* xvi (Feb. 11, 1915), p. 409.

[5] Bush, *The Origin of Ezra Pound's Cantos,* pp. 246–47, and Wendy Flory, *Ezra Pound and the Cantos* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1980), pp. 122–27.

[6] All references are to *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, 1971). Canto and page numbers are given in the text. Permission to quote from this volume has been granted by New Directions Publishing Corp.

[7] On John VIII and the conference on union, see G. Ostrogorsky, *A History of the Byzantine State,* trans. J. Hussey (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1957), pp. 499–503; D. M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1972), pp. 370–79; and Flory, *Ezra Pound and the Cantos,* pp. 124–25.

[8] On Pasti, see C. F. Terrell, *A Companion to the Cantos of Ezra Pound* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1980), I, 103–04.

[9] On Greece after World War I, see M. L. Smith, *Ionian Vision: Greece in Asia Minor* (London: St. Martin's, 1973).

[10] For example, see *New Europe,* 12, No. 154 (Sept. 25, 1919), 252; *Contemporary Review,* 115 (Feb. 1919), 155; and G. F. Abbot, *Greece and the Allies* (London: Methuen, 1922), pp. 218–19.

[11] Abbot, *Greece and the Allies,* p. 219. See also *Contemporary Review,* 115 (Feb. 1919), 155.

[12] Abbot, *Greece and the Allies,* pp. 226–27, and Smith, *Ionian Vision,* pp. 160–70.

[13] In fact, the Greek government directed its representatives to use this strategy; see D. Kitasakis, *Propaganda et passions en politique internationale: La Grèce et ses revendications à la conférence de la paix (1919–1920)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), p. 147.

[14] Jeffrey Meyers, "Hemingway's Second War: The Greco-Turkish Conflict, 1920–22," *Modern Fiction Studies,* 30 (1984), 24–36, and the same author's *Hemingway: A Biography* (New York: Harper, 1985), pp. 97–107.

[15] In 1940 Hemingway told a *Kansas City Times* reporter that he observed the fighting. See *Conversations with Ernest Hemingway,* ed. M. J. Bruccoli (Jackson, Miss.: Univ. of Mississippi Press, 1986), p. 22.

[16] Ernest Hemingway, *Dateline: Toronto,* ed. W. White (New York: Scribner's, 1985), pp. 244–45.

[17] *Ernest Hemingway: Selected Letters 1917–1961,* ed. Carlos Baker (New York: Scribner's, 1981), p. 91.

[18] Hemingway, *Dateline: Toronto,* p. 233.

[19] Meyers, *Hemingway: A Biography,* p. 74.

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[20] Hemingway, *Dateline: Toronto,* p. 219.

[21] Ernest Hemingway, "On the Quai at Smyrna," in *The Fifth Column and the First Forty-Nine Stories* (New York: Scribner's, 1938), pp. 185, 186.

[22] *New Europe,* 12, No. 154 (Sept. 25, 1919), p. 7.

[23] Hemingway, *Dateline: Toronto,* p. 245.

[24] Terrell, *A Companion to the Cantos of Ezra Pound,* pp. 104–05.

[25] On this see J. Barros, *The Corfu Incident of 1923* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1965).

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The £ S.d. of *Dubliners*

Berni Benstock

That unique collection of short stories called *Dubliners* concerns itself with Dubliners, those unique denizens of the capital of Ireland then known as the second city of the British Empire and (occasionally) the seventh city of Christendom—designations which were once erroneously believed by some to actually be attributes. The citizens themselves, although often based on real people known by James Joyce and especially by his father, are primarily fictitious: although *Ulysses* would later introduce real and fictional people to each other (J. C. Doyle and Molly Bloom on the concert stage, Myler Keogh and Percy Bennett in the boxing ring, George Russell and Stephen Dedalus in the National Library), *Dubliners* made no such attempt. Even certain "known" personages, such as the English Jesuit Father Bernard Vaughan—mentioned by his actual name in *Ulysses*—is portrayed in *Dubliners* by a fictional surrogate, Father Purdon.

To an important degree James Joyce's boast about *Ulysses* ("if the city one day suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of my book") does not apply as easily to the earlier volume of short stories, despite its all-inclusive title. There are many references to real places, and even to certain business houses extant in Joyce's day (Pim's, the Stores, Johnny Rush's, Terry Kelly's, and a selection of pubs and book dealers—O'Neill's, Davy Byrne's, the Scotch House, Mulligan's of Poolbeg Street, Michael Hickey's, George Webb's, Edward Massey's); there are also many invented ones, particularly where it was necessary for the author to be diplomatic (Crosbie and Alleyne's, the *Eire Abu* Society, the Liffey Loan Bank, the Black Eagle, old Mr. Leonard's wine business). A fine example of Joyce's delicate handling of the familiar in terms of the quasi-fictional is Corless's, the restaurant in which Chandler meets Gallaher in "A Little Cloud," and

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obviously Gallaher's home turf: in actuality it was then known as The Burlington, but was run by Thomas Corless. And one may suspect that the bartender dubbed by Gallaher "garçon" and "François" was known to everyone else as Frank or Francis.

Unlike *Ulysses*, Joyce's *Dubliners* does not present as firm an anchor in time as it does in place, nothing comparable to a date as fixed as June 16, 1904. There are surprisingly few time frames in any of the stories, just an overall impression that they range around the turn of the nineteenth century, mostly in the 1890s and as far forward as the Ulyssean year of Joyce's departure from Dublin. Vagueness of time is especially functional for the first three stories: if we are invited to assume that the boy in "The Sisters," "An Encounter," and "Araby" is the same person throughout, then he must be allowed to mature over several years, without the span in his age specified. Specific indicators of historical time are generally more apparent in the later stories, those which indicate a "time present" for their events. "Ivy Day in the Committee Room" offers up a definite date, October 6, 1902, but only to those aware that Charles Stewart Parnell died on that day eleven years earlier, and is now cabalistically due for resurrection. We can conjecture that "The Dead" is set on January 6 (the Day of the Epiphany/Twelfth Night), probably just after the London sensation of Enrico Caruso in 1903, but these dates are left without irrefutable substantiation by internal evidence. At the earlier end of the time spectrum is the date of the Araby Bazaar in May 1894, when Joyce himself was twelve years old—an age the reader may or may not be willing to assign to the protagonist of "Araby." Reluctance to do so may stem from the existence of a blatantly stated date at the outset, that of the death of Father Flynn in "The Sisters": "July 1st, 1895." If fictional dating and historical dating were allowed to coexist, the boy in the three stories would find himself regressing in age. Joyce, of course, had tampered with the designation for Flynn's demise over various versions of the story, finally arriving at the specifics of the age of sixty-five in 1895, perhaps so that the priest's dates of conception and birth would be of historic importance.

Another kind of time-barometer derives from Dublin's existence as a British city, not just in the purposeful reminders planted throughout the book and significantly concentrated in "Two Gallants," but in those that the accidents of time and the pressures of history have since made apparent. For Joyce's purposes it was apt that Father James Flynn, who had been born in Irishtown, should end his days unhappily in Great Britain Street, and that Lenehan and Corley should be tracked in their

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wanderings from Rutland Square. Both the street and the square have since been renamed for Charles Stewart Parnell. Maria alights from her tram at Nelson's Pillar, and although that totem of British imperial power remained erect for many decades of the Irish Free State and Republic, it too is now an anachronism best "reconstructed" in the works of James Joyce. The statue of King Billy (William of Orange to his loyal subjects) hardly lasted as long, although in Gabriel Conroy's anecdote about his grandfather's horse it has a central position. Kingsbridge Station, from which James Duffy hears a train emerging, has been renamed, as has the Kingstown Station where Jimmy Doyle and his party emerge to board their yacht. The demise of the position of English royalty in Ireland played havoc with the Royal University, where Gabriel took his degree, and the Theatre Royal, where the opera company performed to the delight of some of those assembled at the Morkans' dinner table. And operatic bass Mr. Duggan once sang the role of "the king in the opera of *Maritana* at the Queen's Theatre."

Not that royalty ever sets the scene in *Dubliners*. A visit by Edward VII looms large as imminent in "Ivy Day," contrasting with the demise of the shade of Ireland's "uncrowned king," Parnell. Joyce's world is essentially that of the Dublin bourgeoisie, the class in which he had his own roots and from which he derived his own experiences. As a collection of stories that has as its aim the writing of a "chapter in the moral history" of Ireland, it uncovers a wide cross section of the middle class, from the harassed shop girl Eveline Hill to that merchant prince of butchers, Jimmy Doyle's father. The spectrum remains almost exclusively bourgeois: no semblance of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy in the Big Houses of Merrion Square is particularly discernible, nor do we find a laborer or navvy or even a carpenter as a central character. Yet there are indications that Joyce sought to provide an *intimation* of the wider sociographics of Dublin life, from the shadowy mechanic in a lower-class eatery on a "dark quiet street" to Mary Jane's pupils from "better-class families on the Kingstown and Dalkey line." Mr. Browne in "The Dead" is introduced as a lone Protestant among the established Catholics of the Morkan soirée, and there is even a hint of the presence in Dublin of a Jewish Mr. Goldberg in "Grace," but essentially the world of Joyce's Dubliners is Irish Catholic—as it is Irish bourgeois.

The professional common denominator in *Dubliners* is the clerk (Farrington, Chandler, Duffy, Doran, Donnelly), the white-collar worker with eminent claims of respectability but often with only a tenuous hold on economic survival. James Duffy's bank job seems particularly secure and his position somewhat elevated, while Farring-

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ton is obviously unsuited to office work and in imminent danger of being booted out. His grasp on class privilege is slipping, yet as he steals away for a quick drink his ploy is to secrete a cap in his pocket: the chief clerk, seeing Farrington's hat still on the rack, is expected to assume that he is still in the building, for he would hardly risk a loss of respectability crossing the street bareheaded. With a large family to support Farrington can least afford to lose his job; Duffy, on the other hand, has only himself to provide for and a much better salary with which to do it. Physically and temperamentally unsuited to a confining office and better equipped for manual labor, Farrington deems class status as sufficiently important to resort to desperate acts of subterfuge. Even if this particular clerk deserves the sack for inefficiency (much less insubordination), Chandler apparently does not: there is every reason to believe that he is competent in his office (although as a would-be poet he may think himself superior to it), but there is also the indication that he too may be vulnerable. Farrington recalls that someone called "little Peake" was "hounded" out of his job to make room for the boss's nephew—what job security then for "little Chandler"? Ironically, both Farrington and Chandler, at opposite ends of the equation, offend against the sanctity of their bourgeois positions: the strongman with a reputation to uphold and the poet with a reputation to establish both fail to conform to type.

When Eveline Hill momentarily chooses to give up her demeaning job in the Stores (salary: seven shillings a week), she realizes that she will quickly be replaced, but a need for security and an overpowering sense of responsibility conspire to paralyze her in the act of escape. Other Dubliners may have managed to shake off bourgeois burdens and opt for lives of precarious freedom: John Corley is perfecting his talents as a gigolo of sorts, while his crony Lenehan cadges drinks by wobbly wit and threadbare subterfuge ("his name was vaguely associated with racing tissues"). "Two Gallants" tracks the ascendant line of Corley's progress toward the attainment of a "small gold coin" (apparently ten shillings—more than Eveline earns in a week at the Stores), while Lenehan's arc is correspondingly descending. He finds himself hungry and tired, condescends to eat a plate of peas in a "poor-looking shop" on that "dark quiet street" off Rutland Square, where the other customers, a mechanic and two work-girls, eye him suspiciously. In order to be even acceptable in this proletarian ambience Lenehan has to attempt to "belie his air of gentility," and in a moment of weakness even yearns for the perks of respectability:

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> He was tired of knocking about, of pulling the devil by the tail, of shifts and intrigues. He would be thirty-one in November. Would he never get a good job? Would he never have a home of his own? He thought how pleasant it would be to have a warm fire to sit by and a good dinner to sit down to. . . . He might yet be able to settle down in some snug corner and live happily if he could only come across some good simple-minded girl with a little of the ready.

With his experiences in the ways of their world Farrington might well be able to advise reform-minded Lenehan on the pitfalls of crepuscular daydream: that husbands may lapse into pubcrawls in lieu of heading home; that good simple-minded girls may develop into wives who retreat into chapels of an evening; that the good dinner may have to be reheated by an inefficient child instead, who had also allowed the warm fire to die out. (But Farrington may not have been as calculating in his choice of brides, and the airtight compartments of the *Dubliners* stories never allow the participants to learn from each other's experiences—and rarely their own.) Farrington, however, would not have been able to discern the shifts in Lenehan's speculations from real concern to an exalted variation of his usual "shifts and intrigues," occasioned by the satisfaction derived from having eaten his plate of peas (a bottle of stout had altered Mr. Henchy's hospitality toward Joe Hynes in "Ivy Day" with the same subtlety of elision). For the duration of the story Lenehan remains an incorrigible "gallant," a segment of the middle class that views itself as kicking over the traces, but in actuality is being summarily dumped in order to make room for those who embody the class mores more adequately. (The bourgeois pie can be cut into larger slabs if fewer claimants insist on their slices, so the unspoken rule has always been to allow various members to fall away quietly.) In *Ulysses* both gallants return for an ironic encore: Corley's ascent has proven to be short-lived, and late at night he is found derelict and alone, friendless, homeless, penniless, panhandling from Stephen Dedalus, while Lenehan has temporarily persevered (his association with racing tissues has strengthened), still living by his wits. Yet even his newfound status may be on the wane: his touting of Sceptre for the Gold Cup has seriously backfired with the win by Throwaway, earning him the enmity of so important a swell as Blazes Boylan.

Joyce operates not only as a chronicler of his class but also as its severest critic, an aspect Ezra Pound may have overlooked when he denounced *Finnegans Wake* over Radio Rome as a "bourgeois novel." Every time-revered percept of the bourgeoisie is carefully dismantled in

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Dubliners: that they are hard-working, honest, religious, temperate, and secure. Those who succeed best are those who profit from the hard work of others or finagle lucrative contracts; whatever their sense of personal honesty, it does not disallow shady business practices; and their religiosity is engineered to consolidate social and economic control. Mr. Alleyne can play the suave gallant with Miss Delacour while the Farringtons are copying out the correspondence under the watchful eye of the chief clerk, Mr. Shelley. Mrs. Mooney can feel assured that Bob Doran will do the right thing and marry her daughter Polly, since Doran knows that any scandal will bring down the wrath of his employer, the Catholic wine merchant, Mr. Leonard. Mr. Fitzgerald can blithely shortchange Kathleen Kearney, for he is confident that he has only the girl and her mother to deal with, Mr. Kearney having been rendered ineffectual. And Mr. Duffy, who apparently does his job well as a cashier in a private bank, has dissuaded herself from stealing from his bank not out of principle but because of the practical inadvisability of such a venture: "He allowed himself to think that in certain circumstances he would rob his bank, but, as these circumstances never arose. . . ." The narrow confines of the spiritual lives of Joyce's Dubliners are mirrored by the material universe as well; for someone who lives "at a little distance from his body" and considers himself "an outcast from life's feast" to contemplate the criminal act should raise at least one eyebrow. That he is constrained for reasons unrelated to ethical values makes the unnecessary contemplation of the act that much more pathetic.

What ostensibly appears to be the firm rock of economic stability proves vulnerable: Joyce's counterpartite pattern sharply contrasts the victor and the vanquished, the loser quickly losing all while the winner is slowly deprived of his spoils. If Jimmy Doyle's father is the epitome of success as a butcher who has attained wealth and status ("He had also been fortunate enough to secure some of the police contracts and in the end he had become rich enough to be alluded to in the Dublin newspapers as a merchant prince"), then his diminished counterpart is Polly Mooney's father, the defunct butcher who was now "obliged to enlist himself as a sheriff's man" (even their odd relationships with The Law are counterpoised). Allowing for individual strength of character, Mr. Doyle reveals no significant lapses; Mr. Mooney's weakness was drink: "He drank, plundered the till, ran headlong into debt. It was no use making him take the pledge: he was sure to break out again a few days after. By fighting with his wife in the presence of customers and by buying bad meat he ruined his business." (The emphasis here is

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exclusively on the effect on his function as a businessman—not on his health, personality, family relationships, ethical values, or spiritual state.) Mr. Doyle had made an important compromise in order to succeed: he "had begun life as an advanced Nationalist, but modified his views early" (hence police contracts). Mr. Mooney could not modify his drinking, and ruined not just himself but his business. Not that Mr. Doyle remains totally invulnerable: what mistakes he may have avoided his son makes in his stead. During the events of "After the Race" Jimmy drunkenly gambles away what must be assumed to be a large portion of his patrimony, partly because in the presence of the Englishman Routh, Jimmy "felt the buried zeal of his father wake to life within him: he aroused the torpid Routh at last." Also in contrast to the intemperate Mr. Mooney, "A Mother" introduces Mr. Kearney, the successful bootmaker on Ormond Quay who can afford to send his family away on holiday to the fashionable resorts, but for all his solid masculine presence he can do little to prevent Mr. Fitzgerald and the Committee from denying his daughter her contracted fee.

The precariousness of even the most staunchly comfortable of the middle class is intimated throughout *Dubliners,* but nowhere as richly and poignantly as in "The Dead," where the Morkans display the full panoply of their solid position. Available for scrutiny is an impressive array of food, the goose and the ham and the spiced beef, the jellies and jams, the nuts and fruit and chocolates and sweets, the port and the sherry; and in particular the controlled and orderly arrangement of the drinks on the piano: "three squads of bottles of stout and ale and minerals, drawn up according to the colors of their uniforms, the first two black, with brown and red labels, the third and smallest squad white, with traverse green sashes." They have maintained the full measure of their genteel circumstances, their Christmas party the exhibition of their sustained success ("For years and years it had gone off in splendid style as long as anyone could remember"), but now Mary Jane is giving music lessons, and her aunts are very careful to ensure that her pupils "got the best slices," since they came from wealthy, prominent families "on the Kingstown and Dalkey line." The death of Pat Morkan (there is no surviving male Morkan) meant that they had had to sell their house in Stoney Batter, and although they still "believed in eating well; the best of everything: diamond-bone sirloins, three-shilling tea and the best of bottled stout," they now are reduced to living in a "dark gaunt house on Usher's Island, the upper part of which they rented from Mr. Fulham, the cornfactor on the ground floor." The landlord, incidentally, is not present at the Morkans' soirée: the

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implication may be that his social level is below theirs or that his economic level is above theirs.

In the Dublin world perhaps only death takes precedence over household economics, as witness the events of "The Sisters," where the protagonist is allowed a relatively finance-free existence, too young to understand circumstances around him in economic terms. Not that he is unaware of relative degrees of wealth and poverty: the household in which he lives can afford to offer casual visitors like Old Cotter "a pick of that leg of mutton," an instance of Irish hospitality in which there actually is a leg of mutton readily available, while his perceptions of the Flynn notions store are quite exact ("an unassuming shop, registered under the vague name of *Drapery*"). He is the one who is the bearer of the regular gift of snuff from his aunt to Father Flynn (perhaps in payment for whatever tutorial the priest was providing). In his own terms he is conscious of the donation as a present, and from Eliza Flynn he hears the expression of gratitude offered to his aunt, "you, Ma'am, sending him his snuff." Whatever the level of sophistication with which he comprehends these matters, there is no overlooking his ability to perceive "how clumsily her skirt was hooked at the back and how the heels of her cloth boots were trodden down all to one side"—this on a local entrepreneur who sells such items as children's bootees and repairs umbrellas. (A classic symptom of the devalued existence of the peddler is an inability to provide for one's self that service which one provides for others.)

For the child even the most basic exchange of coppers does not visibly take place. Instead, he apprehends a world of barter, donation, charity, and—when all else fails—doing without (as symbolized by the empty grate of the Flynn dwelling). Bits of mutton are exchanged for worldly wisdom and advice; High Toast snuff periodically donated or exchanged for lessons; biscuits and sherry offered to a guest at a wake; flowers are brought by Father O'Rourke and candlesticks loaned from the chapel. The reader cannot help being aware that expenses are incurred (the woman who comes in to wash the body is paid for her services; the sherry and cream crackers had to be bought; the newspaper announcement paid for) but the polite world of the petit bourgeois does not allow for direct references to such money matters, while the boy apparently remains oblivious of them, although obliquely aware of simony, which he visualizes as a person rather than a concept or the tangibles of a concept. He knows that Cotter has experiences in a distillery, but to him this implies "faints and worms," rather than an occupation. It is a world in which Father Flynn's life is bartered for an

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"eternal reward," but in which the boy is not frequently privy to the exchange of coins of the realm, unlike his successors in "An Encounter" and "Araby."

There is no evidence that the child knows the price of a packet of High Toast, but soon will learn that money is needed for a day's miching and how much a ticket to the Araby Bazaar will cost. Whereas the opening childhood story is devoid of currency, the next two graduate from a song of sixpence to an opera of two shillings; yet whereas "An Encounter" suggests a surfeit of "a bob and a tanner instead of a bob," "Araby" records the frustrations evolving from the insufficiency of a mere florin. That the protagonist and his two schoolmates are easily able to amass sixpence each for the day away from school attests to the relative comforts of their family incomes (which translates into social position by the repeated reminders that they are not National School pupils but day students at a Jesuit institution, apparently Belvedere College). From the first the narrator assumes an exalted position in relation to the sixpences, collecting and holding Mahony's and Leo Dillon's money, while showing his own to them. His role as banker qualifies him for James Duffy's profession in later life, and just as Duffy is reluctant to appropriate imprudently from his own bank, the boy is unclear as to the proper disposition of Leo Dillon's money once Dillon fails to join their expedition. Mahony, however, is quite clearheaded and definite ("That's forfeit. . . . And so much the better for us"), demonstrating a basic characteristic of capitalist enterprise which the narrator hardly objects to once it has been delineated for him. For their refreshment they buy biscuits and chocolate and raspberry lemonade, but never indicate how much they spent or whether they have encroached on the forfeited share.

Mahony and his mate treat all the money on hand as their own, casual about how they got it and relaxed in their expenditure: money was never a problem for them on this day and they seem to expend little thought on the subject. For the youth in "Araby" the realities are indeed sharper: not only must he depend on his uncle's largesse but he must also wait for the uncle's arrival home before receiving it (there is little doubt that the uncle has been delayed in the pubs spending his own pay on his own predilections). Nor does the money prove to be sufficient. What may have been a generous donation on the part of the uncle translates as a paltry sum for its recipient, for whom the time of childhood is running out and the ensuing needs are not met by his role as a dependent. The transition is clearly marked: "I could not find any sixpenny entrance and, fearing that the bazaar would be closed, I

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passed in quickly through a turnstile, handing a shilling to a weary-looking man." The *rites de passage* from the sixpence childhood of the boy in "An Encounter" to the twice-sixpence demanded by the boy's new status as a male intent on buying a present for Mangan's sister are made difficult by the discrepancy between his own estimation of his new position and the time it takes for his credentials to be verified. The adult world has failed to notice the immediate change in him; time's delay impedes his progress toward quick maturity; and his finances are inadequate to bankroll his anticipated life style. Nonetheless, he has become wise in the ways of the economic world, choosing a third-class train carriage for economy but a shilling entrance for expediency, and comprehending the chasm between what a present would cost and what money he now has left in his pocket.

An important transition is effected when the stories of adolescence succeed those of childhood: although Eveline is only nineteen years old, her role as a wage earner is an essential characteristic, and her salary the only specifically quantified one in *Dubliners*. The point has been reached where children no longer receive, but must earn; while remaining children within the familial context, they are also expected to donate to household expenses—a fate that Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait* accepted with gusto when awarded his prize money, but which Stephen in *Ulysses* assiduously avoids. There is little doubt that Mr. Hill anticipates the Mr. Dedalus of *Ulysses*, and the uncle in "Araby" was a mild and reasonable head of household by comparison. Eveline's recollection of the Saturday evening ritual indicates what a battle royal pay night in Dublin can be:

> the invariable squabble for money on Saturday nights had begun to weary her unspeakably. She always gave her entire wages—seven shillings—and Harry always sent up what he could but the trouble was to get any money from her father. He said she used to squander the money, that she had no head, that he wasn't going to give her his hard-earned money to throw about the streets, and much more, for he was usually fairly bad of a Saturday night. In the end he would give her the money and ask her had she any intention of buying Sunday's dinner. Then she had to rush out as quickly as she could. . . .

In a capsule of scrupulous meanness collapsing a long scene of sustained action and dialogue, Joyce's potent passage not only reveals Eveline's exact contribution (a seemingly unnecessary reiteration of her weekly wage), but conceals the amounts offered by brother Harry (variable) and Mr. Hill (also variable?). The mystery surrounding the exact nature of their donations adumbrates the conditions of the

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following story, "After the Race," where an atmosphere of relatively high finances smokescreens the particulars of pounds, shillings, and pence—although it is to be assumed that the financial currencies involved are detailed in guineas. How much money did Mr. Doyle make in order to qualify as a merchant prince of butchers? How much did he impart to his son Jimmy to invest in the automotive enterprise? And how much did Jimmy actually lose at cards? In a world where every sixpence counts, and every seven-shilling salary is carefully parceled out for necessities, what price Jimmy's squandered patrimony?

Bourgeois mores dictate that monetary discussions are a commonplace but that one's salary figures are kept shrouded in secrecy. The repetition of Eveline Hill's seven shillings is hardly accidental in a work in which exceedingly few items are ever divulged more than once, and many important pieces of factual information are totally withheld. Eveline's wages are an open secret (her father certainly knows the precise amount), since she is not the sole determiner of her financial situation; at nineteen she is still a dependent member of her father's household despite her wage-earning capacity. Thereafter in *Dubliners* salary figures are unavailable: we never find out how much Mr. Leonard pays Bob Doran, or what Chandler earns at the King's Inns or Farrington at Crosbie and Alleyne's, or James Duffy at the private bank on Baggot Street. We can assume that Maria's position at the Dublin by Lamplight Laundry is essentially a charitable arrangement which includes bed and board, and although she carefully doles out her expenditures for the evening out ("In the purse were two half-crowns and some coppers. She would have five shillings clear after paying tram fare"), she does pride herself on being financially independent to a significant degree: "She arranged in her mind all she was going to do and thought how much better it was to have your own money in your pocket." Such solvency may be self-deceptive. Like others who feel secure in their jobs or smug in their accumulated assets (Doran, Doyle), she faces an uncertain future; she muses that "Often he [Joe Donnelly] wanted her to go and live with them; but she would have felt herself in the way . . . and she had become accustomed to the life of the laundry." That Mrs. Donnelly (the actual source of Maria's apprehensions about being "in the way") should predict that "Maria would enter a convent before the year was out" does not bode well for Maria's capacity for work at the laundry. We can only speculate on how close she is to her dotage, but there is a comic echo in her night's miching of the boys in "An Encounter," as she parcels out her money for penny cakes and a plumcake.

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Maria's generosity drastically depletes her financial resources. "Two-and-four" for the plumcake almost annihilates one of her half-crowns, and "a dozen of mixed penny cakes" almost halves the other. (And the acrimony caused by the inquest over the lost cake destroys whatever good will the purchases should have bought.) Maria's meager five shillings may have been sufficient for an evening out—she still comes away with one shilling and eight pence in her purse—but Farrington in "Counterparts" senses that it would not be enough for his "spell of riot." In order to finance his evening out, and finding that he spent his last penny for the afternoon glass of porter, he pawns his watch. Offered only a crown (five shillings), Farrington holds out for and eventually gets six shillings from Terry Kelly, yet that too eventually proves inadequate considering the present state of "the barometer of his emotional nature." One can only speculate how much money would ultimately have proven enough for Farrington to have arrived at the desired degree of drunkenness, or whether his emotional nature might not have precluded any possible success in obliterating his awareness of disaster.

Nonetheless, a careful tracking of the trickle of shillings and pence over the course of an evening in Davy Byrne's, the Scotch House, and John Mulligan's indicates how futile his Sisyphean venture had been. Lacking Lenehan's talent for "holding himself nimbly at the borders of the company until he was included in a round," Farrington establishes himself at the center of the company with his repeatable retort to Mr. Alleyne as his trump. Yet, between Higgins at Davy Byrne's and Weathers in Mulligan's, Farrington is diminished in battles of wit and strength, and watches his money go primarily for the drinks of others. Allowing for the obvious gaps in the narrative detailing, Farrington is clocked as having consumed nine drinks (probably all hot whiskey punches) and having paid for at least fifteen, plus the extra expense of Weathers' lavish tastes for Appolinaris water with his whiskey. He has spent five shillings and ten pence ("he had only twopence in his pocket"), not only having failed to capitalize on his piece of arrogant wit by receiving free drinks, but also having failed to break even. His remaining twopence would barely provide a raspberry lemonade for a schoolboy out on a day's miching.

Just how precarious the Farrington family finances must be can only be assumed from several categories of evidence: that he is virtually penniless on this particular day; that his credit is not good at his own place of employment; that he is in danger of losing that employment; that his drinking is an expensive habit to finance; that he has a large

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family to support. His logical counterpart is someone like James Duffy (good job, no dependents, no expensive habits), yet Thomas Chandler intrudes as a more appropriate comparison. In character he resembles Duffy more than Farrington, except that he has married, and the implications are that pretty-faced Annie Chandler requires a good bit more to keep her content. Whereas personal finances were paramount throughout "Counterparts," they make a late appearance in "A Little Cloud," but once on the scene they quickly become potent. The almost too-casual statement that "To save money they kept no servant but Annie's younger sister Monica came for an hour or so in the morning and an hour or so in the evening to help" drops into place to indicate that Annie *expects* domestic service no matter what. That she also expects parcels of coffee from Bewley's follows immediately after, and she receives husbandly gifts of summer blouses that cost "ten and elevenpence" (obviously an item of clothing out of the question for Eveline Hill). Although she made quite a show of objecting to the outrageous price, she nonetheless chose to keep the blouse because she was so delighted with it. Annie's penchant for pretty things mirrors her husband having been tempted irrevocably by her pretty face, and we need only read the furniture to ascertain just how fixed Chandler's eroding position apparently is:

> He looked coldly into the eyes of the photograph and they answered coldly. Certainly they were pretty and the face itself was pretty. But he found something mean in it. . . . Why had he married the eyes in the photograph?
>
> He caught himself up at the question and glanced nervously round the room. He found something mean in the pretty furniture which he had bought for his house on the hire system. Annie had chosen it herself and it reminded him of her. It too was prim and pretty. A dull resentment against life awoke within him. Could he not escape from his little house?

Chandler's entrapment among the furniture is already determined, while Bob Doran faces the inevitability of the sprung trap of pretty-faced Polly Mooney. The indications are that Doran's job may well be a better one than Chandler's (after all, he can afford fifteen shillings a week at Mrs. Mooney's boarding house), but a glance ahead into *Ulysses* corroborates the sealed fate suggested at the end of "The Boarding House."

Financial security, by comparison, sits particularly well on Gabriel Conroy. As is the case with all of the principal wage earners in *Dubliners*, no salary figure is ever quoted, but the aura of well-being that

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surrounds Gabriel (reflected in "his broad, well-filled shirt-front") attests to solid financial security. The house in Monkstown, the servant Bessie, the expense of a night at the Gresham, and numerous other indicators add up to the most affluent kind of burgher this side of that merchant prince of butchers. It is clear that he can afford to be generous with small amounts of money, having loaned Freddie Malins one pound when he went into the Christmas card business, and now presenting Lily with "a coin" as a Christmastime gratuity. But most characteristic of the relaxed state of his family finances is his attitude toward his ancillary career as a book reviewer:

> It was true that he wrote a literary column every Wednesday in *The Daily Express,* for which he was paid fifteen shillings. . . . The books he received for review were almost more welcome than the paltry cheque. He loved to feel the covers and turn over the pages of newly printed books. Nearly every day when his teaching in the college was ended he used to wander down the quays to the second-hand booksellers, to Hickey's on Bachelor's Walk, to Webb's or Massey's on Aston's Quay, or to O'Clohissey's in the by-street.

Surely it is only annoyance with Molly Ivors that makes him regard fifteen shillings as paltry, and we can easily speculate what that amount as incidental increment would mean to Eveline or Farrington or Chandler or Tom Kernan.

Kernan's income apparently depends to a certain extent on his sales commissions, a state of uncertainty not uncommon among a segment of the middle class. Unlike the elder Doyle and Mr. Kearney, obviously a successful entrepreneur as a "bootmaker on Ormond Quay," Kernan retains his status as a member of the *salariat* dependent on his customers to an almost excessive degree. As a petit bourgeois he has delusions of grandeur, and although "he would walk to the end of Thomas Street and back again to book even a small order," he assumed that on the basis of his fastidious clothes (second hand, we learn from evidence in *Ulysses*) he was eligible for the haute bourgeoisie:

> Mr. Kernan was a commercial traveller of the old school which believed in the dignity of its calling. He had never been seen in the city without a silk hat of some decency and a pair of gaiters. By grace of these two articles of clothing, he said, a man could always pass muster. He carried on the tradition of his Napoleon, the great Blackwhite, whose legend he evoked at times by legend and mimicry. Modern business methods had spared him only so far as to allow him a little office in Crowe Street on the window

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blind of which was written the name of his firm and the address—London, E.C.

Kernan is appropriately dressed for a fall from a great height (down the lavatory steps, down the economic ladder), and on the occasion of his perilous and precipitous descent he was temporarily separated from his silk hat. Kernan, like his hat ("dinged"/"battered"), is deemed reparable: all the King's horses and men (Power and Cunningham are "employed in the Royal Irish Constabulary Office in Dublin Castle") are seen at work on his restitution. As a drinker Kernan runs the risk that ruined Mr. Mooney; as a tea-taster he damaged the one physical property on which his livelihood depends, his tongue. Employed by a London firm he may long since have lessened his position in converting to Catholicism to marry someone of that faith; the implications also are that he married socially beneath him; and the large number of children engendered must also have been a drain on his financial resources. In *Ulysses* he reappears upright and functioning in his profession, apparently unchanged directly by his visit to the Jesuit church, and more likely sustained somewhat by his allegiance to the Freemasons instead, since he is still giving lip service to the religion of his origins. His restored tongue wags quite a bit, making him the butt of barroom pleasantries, and gin is still hot in his mouth. Nonetheless, he is still hanging on financially and retaining his claims to respectability.

"Grace" is the one story of public life that offers a larger cross section of the gainfully employed bourgeoisie. Kernan as a salesman is augmented by Fogarty as a single entrepreneur, "a modest grocer," but not without his own background of economic difficulties:

> He failed in business in a licensed house in the city because his financial condition had constrained him to tie himself to second-class distillers and brewers. He had opened a small shop on Glasnevin Road where, he flattered himself, his manners would ingratiate him with the housewives of the district.

Fogarty, of course, is the uninvited and unexpected comforter and outside the cabal enjoined by the two public servants from Dublin Castle, Power and Cunningham. The chosen outsider already in place is C. P. M'Coy, a man who has held more jobs than there are wage earners in the room. His professional career in itself provides a catalog of middle-class Dublin employment that encapsulates the era:

> Mr. M'Coy had been at one time a tenor of some reputation. . . . His line of life had not been the shortest distance between two points and for short periods he had been driven to live by his wits. He had been a clerk in the Midland Railway, a canvasser for

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advertisements for *The Irish Times* and *The Freeman's Journal*, a town traveller for a coal firm on commission, a private inquiry agent, a clerk in the office of the Sub-Sheriff and he had recently become secretary to the City Coroner.

Composite M'Coy is almost the quintessential bourgeois Dubliner, with more jobs than even his presumed successor at the *Freeman*, Leopold Bloom, and more real jobs than those ticked off by Stephen in *A Portrait* for his insubstantial father. If the events of June 16, 1904, follow hard upon those of "Grace," it is gratifying to note that M'Coy is *still* working for the Coroner, for with obviously less wit than Lenehan he would not make much of a go living by them.

The lumpen bourgeois of *Dubliners*, in the wake of those two gallants, are mostly clustered in "Ivy Day in the Committee Room," where they have found temporary but hardly satisfactory employment. Whatever their regular professions may be, and there is no indication anywhere in the story for any of the four canvassers, they are obviously not practicing them at the moment, but have been taken on by the Tierney campaign as paid help. (Henchy and O'Connor do not make the transition into *Ulysses*, but Crofton is gainfully employed in the Collector-General's office; Hynes, the visitor, is a reporter for the *Evening Telegraph*; and Lyons—previously noted as a resident at Mrs. Mooney's—frequents pubs, loses on horse races, but has no visible means of support.)

The supposition seems safe that the quintet in the Committee Room are "between jobs," and considering the concern voiced by O'Connor and Henchy, the recompense expected from the candidate is desperately needed. O'Connor's "boots let in the wet," so he is not out earning his pay, although he is quick to voice his prayer, "I hope to God he'll not leave us in the lurch to-night," and "I wish he'd turn up with the spondulics." Henchy reports, "No money, boys," a matter that he does not take too lightly since he claims, "I expect to find the bailiffs in the hall when I go home." Hynes, not in Tierney's employ, takes the matter of money in stride, but O'Connor notes that "he's hard up like the rest of us." If Tierney intends to keep to his promise ("*when I see the work going properly I won't forget you*") it may well be a long while before the likes of Mat O'Connor sees the candidate's spondulics, although one can assume that as the representative of commercial interests in Dublin, Tierney can afford to pay his workers. "What's the difference between a good honest bricklayer and a publican—eh?" asks Joe Hynes, distinguishing between Colgan, who "goes in to represent the labour classes," and Tierney, who "only wants to get some job or other." The

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answer is a dozen bottles of stout from Tierney's pub, pseudo-payment that quiets and mollifies his disgruntled aides, ending any discussion of spondulics and bailiffs in the hall.

The references to Colgan, and Hynes's pronouncement that "The working-man . . . gets all kicks and no halfpence," are only occasional reminders in *Dubliners* of the existence of the lower classes, except when a down-and-out bourgeois like Lenehan lowers himself to eat in the "Refreshment Bar" on Great Britain Street. Nor is the depressed atmosphere of the Committee Room, where even the finances of a priest are suspect ("And how does he knock it out? asked Mr. O'Connor"), representative of the solid middle class. At their best they can be seen in the Gardiner Street church listening to Father Purdon's business sermon, a distinguished congregation of burgesses:

> Mr. Cunningham drew Mr. Kernan's attention to Mr. Harford, the moneylender, who sat some distance off, and to Mr. Fanning, the registration agent and mayor maker of the city, who was sitting immediately under the pulpit beside one of the newly elected councilors of the ward [Tierney?]. To the right sat old Michael Grimes, the owner of three pawnbroker's shops, and Dan Hogan's nephew, who was up for the job in the Town Clerk's office. Farther in front sat Mr. Hendrick, the chief reporter of *The Freeman's Journal,* and poor O'Carroll, an old friend of Mr. Kernan's, who had been at one time a considerable commercial figure.

The sociodynamics of the bourgeois maelstrom are apparent in this capsule: those on the way up rubbing shoulders with those on the way down; the dignity of the old commerce (silk hats and gaiters) giving way to disreputable practices of moneylenders and pawnbrokers; those that purvey their wares to the solvent and those that batten on the poor.

No single coin of the realm glistens in *Dubliners* as pervasively as Corley's triumphantly revealed half-sovereign, demonstrative, reverberating, representative, symbolic. Whatever our expectations regarding Corley's quest and Lenehan's attendant anxieties, the revelation of the gold coin in his palm illuminated under the lamplight provides the major obscenity of the volume, the most potent instance of simony in secular practice. Other coins pale in association, although they have their simoniac significance (forfeited sixpences, inadequate florins, the small coin tendered as a Christmas gift but serving as a bribe to cover an embarrassing gaucherie, a pawnbroker's demeaning offer of a crown for a watch). In the manner of miraculous revelation Corley makes his grandiose play: "with a grave gesture he extended a hand towards the

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light and, smiling, opened it slowly to the gaze of his disciple. A small gold coin shone in the palm." That the coin is intended for drink goes unstated and requires no statement, and parallels the situation in the Royal Exchange Ward committee room, where no money changes hands, but a dozen of stout is brought in as barter exchange for services rendered and dispels all talk of missing payment. Corley-with-coin-in-hand has an ironic return to the stage of dark Dublin streets when he reappears in *Ulysses* panhandling from Stephen Dedalus. With "Not as much as a farthing to purchase a night's lodgings," and aware of "a decent enough do in the Brazen Head over in Winetavern street . . . for a bob," Corley manages to extract a half-crown from Stephen, who intended to give a shilling but thought the coins in his pocket were pennies. Even the augmented coin that Corley receives from him is a pale reflection of the small gold coin he had once brandished with a disciple-attracting flourish.

That Lord John Corley is desperate enough to ask Stephen about the possibilities of a job attests to the transitoriness of even a gold coin, much less a half-crown. He begs off, however, when told of an opening to be created by Stephen leaving Mr. Deasy's: "I couldn't teach in a school, man. I was never one of your bright ones." In a highly limited job market, where preference may not even depend on attributes, Corley's limitations reduce his possibilities. How much more difficult then are the prospects facing women seeking employment. Eveline is starting as a shop girl, menial under Miss Gavan; Maria, decidedly older and probably better connected, seems to have the run of the kitchen at the Dublin by Lamplight Laundry, with the dummy as her menial. And Eveline has no illusions that "her place would be filled up by advertisement" soon enough if she left. Proprietors of houses on Baggot Street of course have their live-in slaveys, and cornfactors' offices employ typists like Polly Mooney.

Musical talents in musical Dublin apparently open possibilities not available to the ordinary Evelines and Pollys, but "A Mother" exemplifies the traps and pitfalls of the male-dominated profession. Mary Jane as a piano teacher escapes such obstacles by being self-employed, but must defer socially to her well-heeled pupils; her aunt Julia, however, has encountered an unexpected aspect of male domination when the Catholic Church elected "to turn out the women out of the choirs that have slaved there all their lives and put little whipper-snappers of boys over their heads." Even gratuitous service can run afoul of unexpected termination, and this unusual incident marring the yuletime festivities adds to the accumulated bits of evidence

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that the Morkans are very much in the decline, with an excess of emphasis on the past and diminishing prospects for the future.

The economic forces operative in Joyce's Dublin, as everywhere in capitalist society, function along masculine lines of development and entrenchment, and that "dark gaunt house" occupied exclusively by the three Morkan women seems decidedly in its twilight years. If one reads the conclusions to "The Dead" prophetically, the Morkans may be entertaining in grand style for the last time. Kate and Julia are both fatherless and brotherless; no male surviving relation exists as a wage earner for them, and with their niece they live in isolation from those factors that generate new wealth. (Like Maria they apparently face declining economic prospects, but also like her, they are most likely under sentence of imminent death, which would make the financial considerations moot.) Julia's rendition of "Arrayed for the Bridal" may well have been superb, but may also have been her swan song, and she herself admits that "Thirty years ago I hadn't a bad voice as voices go"; Mary Jane, apparently also quite accomplished, has no real chance to capture an audience, as her performance seems to prove: "Gabriel could not listen while Mary Jane was playing her Academy piece, full of runs and difficult passages. . . . He liked music but the piece she was playing had no melody for him and he doubted whether it had any melody for the other listeners." Assuming that Gabriel is more discerning than the others, his censure can be taken as diagnostic.

The Morkan musical talents are peripheral in the financial scheme of things in commercial and industrial Dublin. The women have not been educated and trained to replace the men who made and sustained the family's fortune, and as much as we may laugh with Gabriel at grandfather Morkan's glue (or starch) mill, it was the mill that paid for the house in Stoney Batter and ensured a succession of diamond-bone steaks for the Morkan table. The training which made the horse, the "never-to-be-forgotten Johnny," hypnotically drive the mill has not been lavished on the Morkan women, and music lessons do not provide as much income as glue or starch. A concert career, however, provides decidedly better prospects, yet Miss Devlin does not seem to have had sufficient talent for such a possibility, or no such possibility was presented to her. The important years of her young adulthood are glossed over in the succinctly economical pair of sentences of scrupulous meanness: "She had been educated in a high-class convent where she had learned French and music. . . . When she came to the age of marriage she was sent out to many houses where her playing and ivory manners were much admired." The "age of marriage" precludes

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all other options, and it is as subsequent that she should marry an older, established, solid citizen like Mr. Kearney, who "was sober, thrifty and pious," as it is that she should devote herself to putting her daughter Kathleen on the stage.

Boots, like glue and starch, can be parlayed into profits that can afford holidays for one's wife and daughter in Skerries or Howth or Greystone, yet the bootmaker's genteel environment and his wife's ivory manners fail to prepare either of them for the world of Fitzpatrick and Holohan and the Committee, and the rules by which they function. (Mr. Kearney belongs to the Old School of Kernan and "poor O'Carroll," while the Dublin musical scene is dominated by a harder, more cutthroat clan—the infighting is vicious because the stakes are low.) Ivory manners prove brittle against the immovable force of the Committee intent on cutting its losses, and Mr. Kearney's masculine presence effete, despite the traditional bourgeois values of sobriety, thriftiness, and piety. Bourgeois ideals have been so corrupted and compromised in the world of the *Eire Abu Society* that they correspond to those of the politics of the Royal Exchange Ward, where, as Henchy asserts, "You must owe the City Fathers money nowadays if you want to be Lord Mayor. Then they'll make you Lord Mayor," or the politics of the nation, where, as O'Connor insists, a certain "patriot" is a "fellow now that'd sell his country for fourpence—ay—and go down on his bended knees and thank the Almighty Christ he had a country to sell." Fourpence may not be the highest monetary value discernible in the economic world of *Dubliners,* but it serves as the metaphoric equivalent of the scratching among the citizenry for the necessary pounds, shillings, and pence.

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Hemingway's Primitivism and "Indian Camp"

Jeffrey Meyers

Hemingway's "Indian Camp" (1924)—the first story in his first trade book and always one of his favorites[1]—has been subjected to a wide variety of interpretations, ranging from the obvious to the absurd, by critics who have recognized its power and struggled with its meaning. The story contains two shocking incidents: the doctor performs a Caesarean operation with a jackknife but without anesthetic, and the husband silently commits suicide. At least one critic has sensed that the suicide seems gratuitous—"in the context of the situation as given, it is too extreme an action"[2]—but did not attempt to explain the Indian's behavior. My own interpretation, based on Hemingway's attitude to primitive people and on his knowledge of anthropology, explains the most difficult aspects of the story: why the husband remains in the bunk of the shanty during the two days his wife has been screaming, and why he does not leave the room if he cannot bear her agonizing pain and shrieks. Despite his badly cut foot, he could have limped or been carried out of range of the screams, if he had wished to, and joined the other men. "Indian Camp" reflects Hemingway's ambiguous attitude to primitivism and shows his notable success in portraying the primitive.

The interpretations of the story reveal the limitations of New Critical readings and of Hemingway criticism during the last thirty-five years. The obvious explanation of the Indian's suicide is provided by the doctor in the story—"He couldn't stand things, I guess"[3]—and has been dutifully repeated by more than twenty critics from 1951 to 1983.[4] Other students of the story, bored with the manifest simplicity of this interpretation, have strained for variant readings but offered little more than subjective opinions. George Hemphill (1949) tersely blames the

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breech-birth: "The cause of his trouble is accidental."[5] Thomas Tanselle (1962), whose short but influential note opened a can of worms by mentioning and then dismissing the theory that Uncle George is the father of the baby, stresses the guilt the Indian feels for engendering the child (men, paradoxically, get pleasure from sex; women, pain): "His small part in the plot is itself indicative of his plight as he finds himself superfluous. . . . The Indian father not only feels *de trop* but also guilty for causing so much pain in one he loves. . . . [Hemingway is concerned with] a man's helplessness and feeling of guilt during his wife's labor."[6]

Kenneth Bernard (1965)—like Peter Hays (1971), Larry Grimes (1975), and Gerry Brenner (1983)—pounces on the theory rejected by Tanselle and claims the Indian kills himself because Uncle George is the real father of his putative son: "The new, bastard, way of life is not one that the Indian husband can tolerate; hence another reason [apart from the obvious one] for his suicide."[7] A decade later, Grimes repeats the notion that Bernard got from Tanselle:

> He has been unsuccessful as a husband and an Indian. His wife has made him a cuckold and he must witness the terrible breech-end birth. . . . The unnaturally born child could then be seen as the bastard product of the white man's "rape" of the Indian. The Indian, unable to bear either his cuckoldry or the challenge of the white man's ways (medical intervention in the patterns of birth and death, particularly) slits his throat.[8]

This passage contains several disturbing distortions. Grimes states, but does not show, that "he has been unsuccessful as . . . an Indian." He mistakenly asserts that the breech-birth is "unnatural." He transforms the theoretical paternity of Uncle George into a white man's "'rape.'" He erroneously states the white man intervenes "in the patterns of . . . death." And he does not explain why the Indian "must witness" the terrible birth.

None of the critics explains why the violent Indian—who, if cuckolded, would be more likely to kill George than himself—has waited all this time to act. In "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife" (also 1924), the next story in *In Our Time,* an Indian defies and humiliates Dr. Adams; and in "Indian Camp" there is nothing to prevent the Indian, if sufficiently motivated, to take his revenge. Indian girls are described as sexually promiscuous in "Ten Indians" (1927) and in "Fathers and Sons" (1933), where Nick sleeps with Trudy (while threatening to kill any Indian who even speaks to *his* sister) as Trudy's brother encourages and watches their sexual act. But married Indian women are quite a

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different matter; and there is no evidence in the story that George ever slept with the squaw.

George Monteiro (1973) offers a sociopathological explication: "It is the combination of his debilitating (even embarrassing) injury and the susceptibility (both physical and psychological) which always accompanies the sick role, I would submit, that causes his suicide."[9] The feminists—who predictably impose rather than extract a meaning—present a farfetched variant of Tanselle's guilt theme. Linda Wagner (1975) mentions the "husband's outspoken act of contrition," and condemns the well-meaning and helpful doctor for both his callousness and his cleanliness.[10] Judith Fetterley (1978) carries Wagner's views to an absurd extreme and twists the meaning into precisely the opposite of what Hemingway intended. Lady Fetterley's lover is also guilt-ridden: "The lesson [for feminists] reflected in the double mirror of the two fathers [the doctor and the Indian] is one of guilt—guilt for the attitudes men have toward women and guilt for the consequences to women of male sexuality."[11] Fetterley's exposition deliberately ignores female sexuality (the Indian did not mate with himself) and diminishes rather than enhances the significance of the story.

Joseph Flora (1982), who has the longest elucidation of the story, twice repeats the standard interpretation and adds (but does not explain) a vicarious element: "His suicide suggests that he was dying in his wife's place." Flora, vaguely aware of the primitive aspect, states Nick Adams discovers that "the life of the more primitive people can teach him a great deal, for the primitive contains values [which?] that the doctor's son needs [why?] to discover." Instead of pursuing this fruitful line of inquiry, Flora offers a sentimental "apologies to the Iroquois" explanation: " 'Indian Camp' conveys a great sense of their humanity, of their suffering and ability to love, and of their solidarity."[12] We might expect to find these elements in the story, but in fact Hemingway disappoints our expectations by revealing the opposite—for there is no evidence of humanity, love, or solidarity. The Indians are strikingly affectless and isolated. The men moved out of range of the screams, the husband rolled over against the wall, and the only direct contact with the squaw is made by the three Indians who, with Uncle George, held her down.

Gerry Brenner (1983) adopts Bernard's George-as-father theory and exaggerates Flora's views into post-*Wounded Knee* cant. He maintains, against all reason, that the Indian's death is positive: "His suicide aims to inflict a strong sense of guilt on Uncle George, becomes a dignified act that affirms the need to live with dignity or not at all, and

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lays at the feet of another treacherous white man the death of yet one more of the countless, dispossessed native Americans."[13]

Kenneth Lynn's Freudian autobiographical interpretation (1987) relates the story to the circumstances surrounding the trouble-free birth of Hemingway's first son in 1923. He reiterates the Indian's demoralized apathy—"he cannot bring himself to help her in any way, or even to watch the birth of his son"—and unconvincingly concludes: "when the Indian slits his throat, he acts out the thoughts of suicide to which Hemingway made reference in his letter to Gertrude Stein and Alice Toklas after Hadley and the baby had come home from the hospital."[14] Philip Young (1965), exasperated by the earlier bizarre interpretations, wittily claimed that *he* (not Uncle George) was the father and concluded: "The reason the husband cut his throat was that George had passed out all the cigars he had on him *before* he got to the camp."[15]

Hemingway's attitude toward primitivism was ambiguous. In *Torrents of Spring* (1926), he satirized the naive primitivism of Sherwood Anderson but continued to write, with infinitely more sophistication and skill, in the Lawrencean mode. When Wyndham Lewis' *Paleface* (first published in his magazine *The Enemy* in September 1927) blasted the exaltation of Indian and Negro primitivism in Anderson's *Dark Laughter* (1925), linked it with D. H. Lawrence's *Mornings in Mexico* (1927), and praised Hemingway's satiric parody, Hemingway responded enthusiastically to Lewis' work:

> I am very glad you liked *The Torrents of Spring* and thought you destroyed the Red and Black Enthusiasm very finely in *Paleface*. That terrible———about the nobility of any gent belonging to another race than our own (whatever it is) was worth checking. Lawrence you know was Anderson's God in the old days—and you can trace his effect all through [Anderson's] stuff. . . . In fact *The Torrents of Spring* was, in fiction form, performing the same purgative function as *Paleface*.[16]

At the time of *Porgy, All God's Chillun, The Emperor Jones, Nigger Heaven,* and the cult of jazz, Hemingway rejected the fashionable assumption that the emotional and sensual life of the dark races was superior to that of the white.

Lewis observed that *The Torrents of Spring* "amusingly pursues Mr. Sherwood Anderson through all the phases of his stupidity, especially stressing the 'he-man' foolishness, the 'bursting Spring' side of it."[17] But when Hemingway continued to portray instinctive and inarticulate characters, his former acquaintance and ally unleashed the most damaging attack ever made on his work. In "The Dumb Ox," published

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in *Men without Art* (1934)—a title probably derived from *Men without Women* (1927)—Lewis shot barbs into Hemingway's most vulnerable spots. Lewis emphasized his debt to Gertrude Stein, his lack of political awareness and his mindlessness, and wittily insisted: "Hemingway invariably invokes a dull-witted, bovine, monosyllabic simpleton . . . [a] lethargic and stuttering dummy . . . a super-innocent queerly-sensitive, village-idiot of a few words and fewer ideas."[18] Yet Lewis' reductive satire, which exalted reason over instinct, ignored Hemingway's conscious and complex use of primitivism. He had direct knowledge of the material in "Indian Camp"—it belonged to his childhood experience and was a source of his art—and had made it his legitimate subject.

Rousseau's belief in man's natural goodness and in the inevitable corruptions of civilization as well as the modern concern "with the subconscious mind and anti-rational modes of understanding"[19] inspired a kind of writing that emphasizes nature and freedom, and feels that instinctive and intuitive consciousness is a key to the deepest emotions. Artists who concentrate on the most crucial situations in life, writes Robert Goldwater, the author of the classic study of *Primitivism in Modern Art,* assume that "the further one goes back—historically, psychologically, or aesthetically—the simpler things become; and that because they are simpler they are more profound, more important, and more valuable."[20] Hemingway simplifies his early stories by presenting the events and omitting the explanation.

Hemingway expressed his lifelong attraction to primitive people—for the values of northern Michigan over those of Oak Park—in stories about Indians and Negroes, boxers and bullfighters, Africans and Spaniards, and about tough, stoical heroes like Harry Morgan and Santiago. This literary mode also influenced his speech and behavior, and found expression in his public as well as his fictional persona. He boasted of Indian blood, Indian mistresses, Indian daughters, and liked to imitate Indian speech. Though his youngest sister exclaimed: "Prudence Boulton was a most unattractive little girl. I knew her and that Indian camp there smelled terribly,"[21] Hemingway, in a rapturous passage that expressed his yearning for pure experience with instinctive people, claimed "she did first what no one has ever done better."[22] (In fact, his youthful sex life was severely restricted by his religious training, timidity, and fear of venereal disease; and it was the waitress, described in "Up in Michigan," who did first what other women did better—after he had acquired more sexual experience.)[23]

Hemingway had fifty-seven books on Indians in his library and was

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well read in anthropology. He owned Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890–1915) and Sigmund Freud's *Basic Writings,* which included *Totem and Taboo* (1913).[24] We do not know precisely when Hemingway first read Frazer. But, as John Vickery explains in *The Literary Impact of "The Golden Bough,"* "following its first edition [in 1890], Frazer's ideas made themselves felt in nearly every area of the humanities and social sciences, including literary history and criticism. . . . Even before the artist actually picked up Frazer's book, he could easily have had some idea of its basic concepts. . . . Throughout Frazer's career reviews, summaries, and critiques of his work occupied extended space in numerous periodicals" like the *Athenaeum,* the *Dial,* and the *Nation.*[25] During Hemingway's teens, for example, the *Chicago Evening Post* printed a substantial essay on *The Golden Bough.*[26] Eliot declared that *The Golden Bough* had influenced his generation profoundly;[27] and Frazer's book became intellectually fashionable and familiar after the publication of *The Waste Land* in 1922. Both Pound and MacLeish—whom Hemingway met in 1922 and 1924—read Frazer. And in *The Cantos* and "The Pot of Earth" (1925) they used his "anthropological vision of the primitive past to crystallize the enduring dilemmas of the cultural present."[28]

Hemingway was also receptive to Frazer's motifs and imagery, to his concepts of sex, superstition, and survival. Like Frazer, Hemingway believed that the primitive past influenced the psychology of the present; and Frazer confirmed what Hemingway already knew about Indians from observation and intuition. The anthropological material in "Indian Camp" is as well integrated and stylized as is Shakespeare's reading of Montaigne's "On Cannibals" in *The Tempest.*

Captain James Cook first used the word taboo—which is concerned "with specific and restrictive behaviour in dangerous situations"[29]—in his account of the Polynesians. Frazer believes that taboos are "nothing but rules intended to ensure either the continued presence or the return of the soul. In short, they are life-preservers or life-guards."[30] His ancient peoples, writes Vickery, "seek to endure by invoking myths of divine assistance and rites in which perfect performance assures divine conquest over enemies and hence human survival."[31]

In the section on "Tabooed Places" in *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul,* the part of *The Golden Bough* that clarifies the significance of Hemingway's story, Frazer states that in primitive society the rules of ceremonial purity observed by sacred kings, chiefs, and priests agree in many respects with the rules observed by "girls at their first menstruation, women after childbirth, homicides, mourners, and all

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persons who have come into contact with the dead." During childbirth "women are supposed to be in a dangerous condition which would infect any person or thing they might touch; hence they are put into quarantine until, with the recovery of their health and strength, the imaginary danger has passed away." Frazer offers massive and far-ranging documentation—from tribes in Australia, Tahiti and Manaluki in the South Pacific, as well as from the Sinaugolos of New Guinea, the Kodiak Eskimos of Alaska, and the Ba-Pedi and Ba-Thonga of South Africa—to illustrate the woman's uncleanliness, vulnerability, and danger during her ritual confinement at childbirth. Frazer also explains that after their wives give birth, the warrior-husbands, who now have a greater reason for living, become more cautious and absorb the wives' weakness: "the men become cowardly [and] weapons lose their force."[32]

Later anthropologists have developed and refined (instead of merely repeating, as literary critics tend to do) the ideas of Frazer. Lucien Lévy-Bruhl relates that the husband's behavior is compounded of fear for his wife and desire to protect others "from the evil influence which will emanate from her, especially from her blood." He states that the husband associates the blood from his wife in childbed with the blood flowing from his own death-wound.[33]

Charles Winnick's explication of the concept of couvade—in which a man ritualistically imitates the symptoms of pregnancy and the moans during delivery—is crucial to an understanding of "Indian Camp" and explains why the husband joins his wife in ritualistic seclusion: "The imitation by the father of many of the concomitants of childbirth [takes place] around the time of the wife's parturition. . . . The father may retire to bed . . . and observe some taboos and restrictions in order to help the child." The father practices couvade, Winnick explains, in order to affirm his fatherhood, protect the child, and deflect potential evil from his wife: "The father asserts his paternity through appearing to share in the delivery. . . . The father simulates the wife's activities in order to get all the evil spirits to focus on him rather than her."[34]

In *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, Mary Douglas follows Frazer and emphasizes the primitive belief in "horrible disasters which overtake those who inadvertently cross some forbidden line or develop some impure condition."[35] In the anthropological literature, as in "Indian Camp," the pregnant wife is considered unclean, vulnerable, and in danger; the husband absorbs her weakness and associates her blood with his own death, practices

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couvade to protect his wife and child, and resents the intrusion of those who assist at the birth.

In one of the Nick Adams stories, Hemingway discusses the relation between imagination and reality; and suggests that he knew enough about his father and the Indians to portray what he had never seen: "Everything good he's ever written he'd made up . . . . Of course he'd never seen an Indian woman having a baby. That was what made it good. Nobody knew that."[36] "Work in Progress," the original title of the story that first appeared in Ford's *Transatlantic Review*, not only imitates Joyce's title for the serialization of *Finnegans Wake* but also ironically alludes to the woman's pregnancy and labor. The story is carefully structured. The white men move from the idyllic to the brutal—the two dominant characteristics of the primitive world. They are ferried through the darkness and mist by their Charon-like rowers, and conveyed to the smelly, secluded, and morbid world of the Indians. The Indian men and women are separated (with the exception of the husband and wife) before the intrusion of the white men. The three whites are balanced by the three Indians who help hold down the woman. The husband, who had cut himself with an ax three days earlier, is matched by the wife who is enduring her third day of labor. The husband's second mutilation intensifies his first, the gash on his throat repeats the one on her belly. His straight razor (which would have been useful in the Caesarean operation) corresponds to the doctor's jackknife. Neither George nor the husband has any real function, though both are implicated in the wife's pain by her bite and her screams. And both deflate the doctor—one by mockery, one by suicide—after his successful delivery has physically deflated the woman. The inarticulate screams, laughs, smiles, gestures, and mute acts of the nameless Indians (none of whom speaks) provide a contrast to the ironic words of the doctor ("the screams are not important") and of his son ("[It's] all right"). After the birth, Dr. Adams realizes it was a mistake to bring Nick, who had watched the delivery, but turned away from the afterbirth and the sutures.

The red men in the story are not idealized and the husband, who kills himself—ironically—after his wife has survived the ordeal and given birth to a son, does not exhibit the stoicism one expects from a young Indian. In *A Farewell to Arms*, by contrast, after the death of Frederic Henry's baby and his wife in childbirth (based on the actual, rather than the imagined, Caesarean birth of Hemingway's second son in 1928), Henry represses his feelings and shows no outward emotion. He orders the attendants out of Catherine's room, shuts the door and

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turns off the light. But "it was like saying good-bye to a statue. After a while I went out and left the hospital and walked back to the hotel in the rain."[37]

Hemingway portrays, in the double climax of gory birth and savage death, in pure action without conscious thought, the husband's fatal reaction to his wife's agony, but not the wife's reaction to the husband's suicide. The passive tense of "His throat has been cut" suggests the passivity of the Indian.[38] And Nick's delusive intimations of immortality after his confrontation with death and return to the idyllic lake (the certainty and absolutism of "he felt quite sure that he would never die" reveal Nick's naïveté) provide an ironic contrast to the soldier (an older Nick) in the bombarded trench at Fossalta, who fears and expects death, and prays: "If you'll only keep me from getting killed I'll do anything you say."[39]

The crossing of forbidden lines in dangerous situations exposes men and women to contamination and evil that cause sickness and death. The Indian husband has remained in the room to affirm his fatherhood, to share his wife's pain, and to protect his child. But the couvade (the hidden part of Hemingway's iceberg) is not effective and the wife remains vulnerable. The white men, summoned by the desperate Indians but ignorant of their customs, not only violate the sacred confinement of the woman in childbed, but are forced to treat her brutally and to use a hook (as if she were a squirming fish) to sew up her stomach. The contrast between the squalid and the clinical shows that the Indians need the white man's skill, but are also destroyed by it. The husband cannot bear this defilement of his wife's purity, which is far worse than her screams. In an act of elemental nobility, he focuses the evil spirits on himself, associates his wife's blood with his own death-wound, and punishes himself for the violation of taboo. "Indian Camp" reveals that Hemingway—far from being the Dumb Ox—did not simply glorify the Indians, but based his story on profound understanding, gained from experience and from books, of their behavior, customs, and religion.

[1] *Ernest Hemingway: Selected Letters, 1917–1961*, ed. Carlos Baker (New York: Scribner's, 1981), p. 180.
[2] Samuel Shaw, *Ernest Hemingway* (New York: Ungar, 1973), p. 29.
[3] "Indian Camp," *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway* (New York: Scribner's, 1953), p. 95.
[4] See Harry Levin, "Observations on the Style of Ernest Hemingway," *Kenyon Review*, 13 (Autumn 1951), 606; Philip Young, *Ernest Hemingway: A*

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Reconsideration (1952), rev. ed. (New York, 1966), p. 32; Delmore Schwartz, "The Fiction of Ernest Hemingway," *Perspectives USA*, 13 (Autumn 1955), 84; John Killinger, *Hemingway and the Dead Gods: A Study in Existentialism* (Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1960), (New York, 1965), p. 17; S. F. Sanderson, *Ernest Hemingway* (New York: Grove Press, 1961), p. 30; Joseph De Falco, *The Hero in Hemingway's Short Stories* (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1963), p. 30; Alan Holder, "The Other Hemingway," *Twentieth Century Literature*, 9 (Oct. 1963), 157; Julian MacLaren-Ross, review of *A Moveable Feast, London Magazine*, 4 (Aug. 1964), in Jeffrey Meyers, *Hemingway: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1983), p. 490; Constance Cappel Montgomery, *Hemingway in Michigan* (New York: Fleet, 1966), pp. 63–64; Richard Bennett Hovey, *Hemingway: The Inward Terrain* (Seattle, 1968), p. 15; Nicholas Joost, *Ernest Hemingway and the Little Magazines: The Paris Years* (Barre, Mass.: Barre Publishers, 1968), p. 85; Tony Tanner, review of *By-Line: Ernest Hemingway*, *London Magazine*, 8 (May 1968), in Meyers, *Hemingway: The Critical Heritage*, p. 527; Carlos Baker, *Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story* (New York: Scribner's, 1969), p. 125; Peter Hays, *The Limping Hero* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1971), p. 71; Arthur Waldhorn, *A Reader's Guide to Ernest Hemingway* (New York: Farrar, 1972), p. 54; Louis Rubin, review of *The Nick Adams Stories, Washington Sunday Star*, Apr. 23, 1972, in Meyers, *Hemingway: The Critical Heritage*, p. 586; Norman Grebstein, *Hemingway's Craft* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1973), p. 17; Samuel Shaw, *Ernest Hemingway*, p. 29; Scott Donaldson, *By Force of Will: The Life and Art of Ernest Hemingway* (New York: Viking, 1977), (New York, 1978), p. 297; Wirt Williams, *The Tragic Art of Hemingway* (1977), (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1981), p. 36; David Seed, "The Picture of the Whole: *In Our Time*," *Ernest Hemingway: New Critical Essays*, ed. A. Robert Lee (London: Vision, 1983), p. 21.

[5] George Hemphill, "Hemingway and James," *Kenyon Review*, 11 (Winter 1949), 56.

[6] G. Thomas Tanselle, "Hemingway's 'Indian Camp,' " *Explicator*, 20 (Feb. 1962), item 53.

[7] Kenneth Bernard, "Hemingway's 'Indian Camp,' " *Studies in Short Fiction*, 2 (Spring 1965), 291.

[8] Larry Grimes, "Night Terror and Morning Calm: A Reading of Hemingway's 'Indian Camp' as Sequel to 'Three Shots,' " *Studies in Short Fiction*, 12 (1975), 414.

[9] George Monteiro, "The Limits of Professionalism: A Sociological Approach to Faulkner, Fitzgerald and Hemingway," *Criticism*, 15 (Spring 1973), 153–54.

[10] Linda Wagner, "Juxtaposition in *In Our Time*," *Studies in Short Fiction*, 12 (Summer 1975), 245.

[11] Judith Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1979), p. 46.

[12] Joseph Flora, *Hemingway's Nick Adams* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1982), pp. 31, 25, 30.

[13] Gerry Brenner, *Concealments in Hemingway's Works* (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1983), p. 239, *n*15.

[14] Kenneth Schuyler Lynn, *Hemingway* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), p. 229.

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[15] Philip Young, reply to Kenneth Bernard, *Studies in Short Fiction*, 3 (Fall 1965), ii.

[16] Quoted in Wyndham Lewis, *Rude Assignment* (London, 1950), pp. 203–04.

[17] Wyndham Lewis, *Paleface* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1929), p. 202.

[18] Wyndham Lewis, "The Dumb Ox," *Men without Art* (London: Cassell, 1934), p. 29.

[19] Michael Bell, *Primitivism* (London: Methuen, 1972), p. 71.

[20] Robert Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art*, rev. ed. (New York: Vintage, 1966), p. 251.

[21] Carol Gardner, quoted in Denis Brian, *The True Gen: An Intimate Portrait of Ernest Hemingway by Those Who Knew Him Best* (New York: Grove Press, 1987), p. 183.

[22] Ernest Hemingway, "Fathers and Sons," *The Short Stories of Hemingway*, p. 497.

[23] In his 1950 interview with Lillian Ross, he dropped his articles and spoke a kind of humorous Indian language. But after her malicious piece had appeared, he insisted that he had not "talked like a half-breed chocktaw" (*Letters*, p. 744). On his second African safari in 1954, Hemingway moved from primitivism to primitive. Though going native was especially frowned upon during the Mau-Mau emergency, he shaved his head, hunted with a spear, dyed his clothes the rusty Masai color, and began an elaborate courtship of his African "fiancée." His white hunter described her as "an evil-smelling bit of camp trash," but Hemingway associated her with Prudy Boulton. See Jeffrey Meyers, *Hemingway: A Biography* (New York: Harper, 1985), p. 502.

[24] See James Brasch and Joseph Sigman, *Hemingway's Library: A Composite Record* (New York: Garland, 1981).

[25] John B. Vickery, *The Literary Impact of "The Golden Bough"* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 81, 74–75.

[26] Irving Howe, *Sherwood Anderson* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 1951), pp. 57–58.

[27] T. S. Eliot, "A Prediction in Regard to Three English Authors," *Vanity Fair*, 21 (Feb. 1924), 29.

[28] Vickery, *The Literary Impact of "The Golden Bough,"* p. 149.

[29] E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Preface to Franz Steiner, *Taboo* (London, 1956), p. 20.

[30] James Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 3rd ed. (London, 1911), III, 29.

[31] Vickery, *The Literary Impact of "The Golden Bough,"* pp. 72–73.

[32] James Frazer, "Women Tabooed at Menstruation and Childbirth," *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*, in *The Golden Bough*, III, 138, 147, 151.

[33] Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, "Taboos Relating to Confinements," *Primitives and the Supernatural*, trans. Lilian Clare (New York: Dutton, 1935), p. 331.

[34] Charles Winnick, *Dictionary of Anthropology* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), p. 137.

[35] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966), p. 1.

[36] Ernest Hemingway, "On Writing," *The Nick Adams Stories* (New York: Bantam, 1972), pp. 217–18.

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[37] Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (New York: Scribner's 1969), p. 332.

[38] The Indian's suicide provides a striking contrast to Leopold Bloom's sympathetic and humane response to Mrs. Purefoy's screaming three-day labor in "The Oxen of the Sun" chapter in *Ulysses* (New York: Random House, 1922).

[39] Interchapter VII, *The Short Stories of Hemingway,* p. 143.

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The Waste Land and Jessie Weston: A Reassessment

Leon Surette

My study of Ezra Pound's *Cantos* has led me to examine the occult movement in Europe and America during the late Victorian and early modern period.[1] It has long been evident that occult ideas have had an impact upon modernism at least through French symbolism, William Butler Yeats, and Wassily Kandinsky. Less well known is the probable influence of the man who was the founding editor of the Theosophical Society's journal, George Robert Stow Mead. We know that Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, and T. E. Hulme attended lectures organized by Mead's Quest Society in the Kensington Town Hall; Pound's attendance was regular and began at least as early as 1912. He would often find his future wife, Dorothy, and her mother, Olivia Shakespeare, at the Quest lectures accompanied by Yeats.[2]

Mead's position within the occult movement was prominent and unambiguous. Born in 1863, he joined Blavatsky's Theosophical Society in 1884. After meeting Mme. Blavatsky in 1887, he became her private secretary, undertook revision of her major work, *The Secret Doctrine,* and became editor of the *Theosophical Review*. He was general secretary of the European section of the society until 1897, and was offered the presidency in 1907 on the death of Blavatsky's successor, Colonel Olcott. Instead of becoming president he led a schism and founded the rival Quest Society in 1909. Its center of operation was Kensington, the London borough in which Ezra Pound set up residence late in 1909. Pound read "Psychology and Troubadours" at the Quest Society meetings and the piece was published in the society's journal, *The Quest,* in 1912. Mead was also well known to Yeats.[3]

There is no evidence, so far as I am aware, that T. S. Eliot had any

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contact with Mead, but Jessie Weston was a regular contributor to *The Quest* and a candid admirer of Mead. More to the point, Weston generously acknowledges her indebtedness to Mead for the general hypothesis of her famous anthropological study, *From Ritual to Romance*.

Finally, a casual reference, in Anrich's work on the Mysteries to the *Naassene Document*, caused me to apply to G. R. S. Mead, of whose knowledge of the mysterious borderland between Christianity and paganism, and willingness to place that knowledge at the disposal of others, I had, for some years past, had pleasant experience. Mead referred me to his own translation and analysis of the text in question, and there, to my satisfaction, I found, not only the final link that completed the chain of evolution from Pagan Mystery to Christian ceremonial, but also proof of that wider significance I was beginning to apprehend. The problem involved was not one of folklore, not even one of literature, but of comparative religion in its widest sense.[4]

Weston, it must be added, also acknowledges her debt to Sir James Frazer, Franz Cumont, and Jane Harrison—all respectable, mainstream anthropologists or classicists. For this reason both Eliot scholars and folklorists of the day have accepted *From Ritual to Romance* as a standard anthropological or folklore study belonging to the Frazer school.[5]

I shall argue in the following pages that this estimate of Weston's study is in error, that, on the contrary, Weston's study embraces the occult belief in a "wisdom tradition" stretching back to remote antiquity, and further that recognition of Weston's occult thesis has consequences for our understanding of *The Waste Land*. The first step in this argument will be to assess the notice taken of *From Ritual to Romance* within literary criticism, particularly Eliot criticism. Secondly, a reexamination of Weston's book in the light of its occult provenance will provide the groundwork for a reexamination of Pound's editing of *The Waste Land*, which will now be seen to be based on thematic considerations as well as stylistic ones. Among the earliest and most influential assessments of Weston's relevance to *The Waste Land* was F. O. Matthiessen's. In the best New Critical manner he judged *From Ritual to Romance* to be redundant to the autonomous self-sufficiency of the printed text. He questions

> whether Miss Weston's valuable study has enabled me to feel the poem more intensely. For nearly everything of importance from her book that is apposite to an appreciation of *The Waste Land*, particularly her central emphasis on the analogous way by which various myths express the mysteries of sex and religion, has been incorporated into the structure of the poem itself, or into Eliot's Notes. Unlike many sections of Pound's *Cantos*, *The Waste Land* does

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> not require recourse to the poet's reading in order to become comprehensible. Its structure is pre-eminently self-contained.[6]

Cleanth Brooks in a 1939 essay referred to Weston exclusively for elucidation of what he called "the basic symbol used, that of the waste land" and the equivalence operative between physical and spiritual sterility.[7] Twenty years later Hugh Kenner cites Ezra Pound himself to the effect that Weston's book is of extremely marginal relevance:

> For the rest, I saw the poem in typescript, and I did not see the notes till 6 or 8 months afterward; and they have not increased my enjoyment of the poem one atom. The poem seems to me an emotional unit. . . .
>
> I have not read Miss Weston's *Ritual to Romance,* and do not at present intend to.[8]

Pound's testimony, as that of the original editor of *The Waste Land,* carries peculiar authority. However, since—as we shall see—Pound's editing of the poem tended to remove its reliance on the Weston material, we may be justified in taking this disclaimer with a grain of salt. Kenner himself later alters his own position and argues that Eliot intends to parody the Weston argument.[9]

The mainstream critical consensus, then, has underplayed Weston's relevance to the poem even in the face of Eliot's headnote, which we should have clearly in mind:

> Not only the title, but the plan and a good deal of the incidental symbolism of the poem were suggested by Miss Jessie L. Weston's book on the Grail legend: *From Ritual to Romance* (Macmillan). Indeed, so deeply am I indebted, Miss Weston's book will elucidate the difficulties of the poem much better than my notes can do; and I recommend it (apart from the great interest of the book itself) to any who think such elucidation of the poem worth the trouble. To another work of anthropology I am indebted in general, one which has influenced our generation profoundly; I mean *The Goldon Bough*; I have used especially the two volumes *Adonis Attis Osiris*. Anyone who is acquainted with these works will immediately recognize in the poem certain references to vegetation ceremonies.[10]

This note has been rather a problem for those who would wish to argue that the Weston book is a red herring. However, Matthiessen, Brooks, and Kenner have had the important support of the poem's "midwife," Ezra Pound (as we have seen), and even of its author, for Eliot recanted his generous acknowledgment of the debt to Weston—thirty-two years after the event: "It was just, no doubt, that I should pay my tribute to the work of Miss Jessie Weston; but I regret having sent so many

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enquirers off on a wild goose chase after Tarot cards and the Holy Grail."[11] Thus Eliot himself joined the consensual dismissal of *From Ritual to Romance,* apparently agreeing that his original recommendation was, after all, misleading.

The whole affair seems rather puzzling and is, I believe, much complicated by the fact that *The Waste Land* is a central document in literary modernism whose axiom of aesthetic autonomy militates against the authority both of influence and of the author himself. In this case we have a poem that is, more or less, coauthored and both "authors" deny the relevance of a work that one of them first recommended to his readers. This rather ambivalent testimony is echoed by critics who deny the importance of the alleged source, yet employ selected components of it—such as the fertility cult dimensions—in critical interpretations.[12]

If we add to this mix the fact that the occult provenance of Weston's study has been public knowledge for nearly thirty years, the affair becomes even stranger. So far as I can determine, John Senior was the first scholar to point out the true nature of Weston's book. He wrote that Weston's study was a book

> whose burden is that the medieval grail stories are based upon the rituals of a lost religion which once covered Europe, the Near East, and even Asia, if not Atlantis and Lemuria—in a word, the burden is the "secret doctrine." And the myths which clothe the doctrine, according to Miss Weston, are occult. The grail legend is one more rendering of the mysteries; its meaning, she says, is identical, exoterically, with the story of Osiris or Christ.
>
> And when we discover from her footnotes that Miss Weston relies heavily on W. B. Yeats, Arthur Waite, and G. R. S. Meade [sic], we should be tempted to suggest more than a suspicion of occultism, and openly declare Miss Weston a member of the occult laity, if not an initiate. This is not to say that Eliot is as close to occultism as Miss Weston—her book was a source, not the poem.[13]

We shall see shortly that Senior's estimate of *From Ritual to Romance* is accurate, but the remarkable thing about his "exposure" of Weston is that it has been completely without consequence for criticism of *The Waste Land.* Even the flurry of reassessment that followed publication of Valerie Eliot's facsimile edition of the poem fails to take notice of Senior's observations. Senior himself has not pursued his discovery, and backs away from it even in the 1959 study in which it appeared.

A lesson can be taken from the misfire of Senior's discovery. *The Waste Land* is a text of such importance and sanctity that it must be protected from any suggestions that it is less than it has been seen to be.

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The poem has been institutionalized, like other classics, and has able defenders and apologists. A case in point is the fate that has befallen the so-called "homosexual theory" which focuses on Eliot's relationship with Jean Verdenal.[14] An "occult theory" of the poem would doubtless suffer the same fate if it were put forward. So far as I can determine, no one has yet put forward such a theory, although some hints and suggestions have been made. The closest thing to an occult reading of *The Waste Land* that I have been able to find is put in an interesting article by Tom Gibbons which presents a persuasive argument that Eliot's source for the Tarot material was not Weston but the occultist A. E. Waite:

> Two main points seem to me to emerge from all this [the foregoing evidence]. The first is that Eliot appears to have known considerably more about occult literature than he admitted to in his notes to *The Waste Land*. The second is that the Tarot cards appear to play a much more important part in the meaning and organization of *The Waste Land* than is generally allowed.[15]

Gibbons does not make anything of Weston's occult connections, but Grover Smith, in his most recent discussion of *The Waste Land*, apparently following Gibbons, does acknowledge Weston's occult provenance. However, he does not pursue the question.[16]

It is beyond the scope of this essay to investigate the nature of Eliot's relations to occult circles in London. All that can be said here on that score is that it is implausible to suppose that he could have been ignorant of those occultists who were the constant subject of gossip in the newspapers of the day. Nor is it plausible that he would have been unaware of Pound's familiarity with the occult. Certainly he knew that Pound was a close associate of Yeats and A. R. Orage—both of whom everyone knew to be occultists. I will argue that Eliot could not have failed to notice the occult nature of Weston's book, and that he submitted his long poem to Pound's scrutiny specifically because he knew Pound to have some competence in occult theories and beliefs; that Eliot sought Pound's advice not—as criticism has long assumed—because he was uncertain about the rhetorical structure of his poem, but rather because he was uncertain about its *thematic* coherence and clarity, given his unfamiliarity with the occult materials that I am suggesting he self-consciously employed in the poem.

The question of Eliot's attitude toward the occult material in *The Waste Land* is also beyond the scope of this essay. I assume that he was extremely skeptical, but he could not have been totally contemptuous of it. Indeed, for the purposes of this essay I adopt the standard posture that criticism has long taken toward the fertility component of the

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poem. No one has ever supposed that Eliot believed royal impotence could cause crop failure. No more need we suppose that he believed in the existence of a secret Mystery tradition or that he accepted Weston's account of it as involving an initiation into the double Mystery of life and death. What *is* claimed is that the original version of *The Waste Land* appealed to those elements, and further that they were significantly suppressed by Pound's blue pencil.

Just as I cannot pursue the question of Eliot's relationship to occult speculation, it would take too much space to demonstrate beyond all doubt that Weston herself was an occultist. Her argument will have to stand as evidence of her beliefs. The book to which Eliot refers us was the only one she published with a regular academic press, and was therefore a little more cautious than her other books. Let me cite some remarks from *The Quest of the Holy Grail,* an earlier work which quite clearly reveals her occultist predilections:

> It is not also without interest, or significance, that readers of romances, unacquainted with the Grail literature in general but familiar with "occult" tradition and practice, should invariably detect this element in the story. More than once I have lent a translation of the *Gawain* Grail adventures to friends whom I had reason to believe were familiar with such subjects; invariably the result has been the same—the book has been returned with the remark: "this is the story of an initiation, told from the outside."[17]

Earlier Weston shows her occult colors quite plainly:

> No inconsiderable part of the information at my disposal depended upon personal testimony, the testimony of those who knew of the continued existence of such a ritual, and had actually been initiated into its mysteries—and for such evidence the student of the letter has little respect [indeed!]. He worships the written word; for the oral, living, tradition from which the word derives force and vitality he has little use. Therefore the written word had to be found. It has taken me some nine or ten years longer to complete the evidence, but the chain is at last linked up, and we can now prove by printed texts the parallels existing between each and every feature of the Grail story and the recorded symbolism of the Mystery cults. (*QHG,* p. 4–5)

Later in the same book she sets out the standard belief both of Theosophists and of the Quest circle in the existence of a secret wisdom tradition surviving underground and reflected in myth and legend:

> There is a stream of tradition, running as it were underground, which from time to time rises to the surface, only

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> to be relentlessly suppressed. It may be the Troubadours, the symbolical language of whose love poems is held to convey another, and less innocent, meaning; or the Albigenses, whose destruction the Church holds for a sacred duty. Alchemy, whose Elixir of Life and Philosopher's Stone are but names veiling a deeper and more spiritual meaning, belongs to the same family. . . . Of similar origin is that Free-Masonry, which outside our own Islands is even to-day reckoned as the greatest enemy of the Christian Faith, and which still employs signs and symbols identical with those known and used in the Mysteries of long-vanished faiths. (*QHG*, pp. 137–38)

This fantasy of a secret history is extremely widespread among occult groups of the period in one form or another. Ezra Pound himself is very familiar with it and makes extensive reference to it in the *Cantos* as well as in his prose.[18] The likelihood that it was Pound's expertise in occult matters that led Eliot to show *The Waste Land* draft to Pound is supported by the fact that, so far as I am aware, he did not seek Pound's or anyone else's rhetorical advice on any other occasion.

Be that as it may, Eliot did not refer his readers to *The Quest of the Holy Grail,* but to the more cautious *From Ritual to Romance,* and probably had no knowledge of the earlier book. I cite the earlier study only to establish the occultist beliefs of Weston so that we can put that matter aside. It should be noted that the term "occult" does not mean ghosts, devils, and ghouls to Weston, as it does in popular culture today. It is true that there are frightening things connected with Weston's occult, but its primary sense for her and in this study is the belief in the possibility of gnosis or direct awareness of the Divine, which is normally hidden or "occluded." Occultists share much with charismatic Christians, but the occultists believe Christ to be only one of many avatars of the Divine, and that gnosis is attainable through ritual initiation—which beliefs (they claim) have earned them persecution at the hands of Christians through the ages.

This occultist version of Western religious history is stated quite flatly in *From Ritual to Romance:*

> But the triumph of the new Faith once assured the organizing, dominating, influence of Imperial Rome speedily came into play. Christianity, originally an Eastern, became a Western, religion, the "Mystery" elements were frowned upon, kinship with pre-Christian faiths ignored, or denied; where the resemblances between the cults proved too striking for either of these methods such resemblances were boldly attributed to the invention of the Father of Lies himself, a cunning snare whereby

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> to deceive unwary souls. Christianity was carefully trimmed, shaped, and forced into an Orthodox mould, and anything that refused to adapt itself to this drastic process became by that very refusal anathema to the righteous.

If we focus for a moment on this aspect of Weston's study, we discover that instead of being anthropology it is religious history. Moreover, it is religious history which tells the story of a vital, imaginative, and charismatic belief suffering persecution at the hands of a bureaucratic, self-righteous, and intolerant religion—of the suppression of a joyous "pagan" rite by dour medieval Catholicism. We need not suppose that Eliot was persuaded by Weston's pseudo-history, nor even that he was attracted to the hypothesis of a suppressed pagan cult. But what was it that Eliot expected readers of *The Waste Land* to find when they followed his instructions and consulted *From Ritual to Romance*? My contention is that he expected them to find an account of the suppression and loss of a religious faith rather than just an anthropological account of Fisher Kings and Grail legends.[19]

However, even more important to my argument is what Weston has to say about the nature of that lost religion dimly bodied forth in the Grail legends. Her account of the story of the dream of Chaus provides some insight into the nature of that lost faith. In the tale Chaus enters the perilous chapel in a dream, is mortally stabbed, and awakes dying from a magic stab wound (*RR*, pp. 180–81). She comments:

> *For this is the story of an initiation* (or perhaps it would be more correct to say the test of fitness for an initiation) *carried out on the astral plane, and reacting with fatal results upon the physical.*
>
> We have already seen in the Naassene document that the Mystery ritual comprised a double initiation, the Lower, into the mysteries of generation, *i.e.*, of physical Life; the Higher, into the Spiritual Divine Life, where man is made one with God.
>
> Some years ago I offered the suggestion that the test for the primary initiation, that into the sources of physical life, would probably consist in a contact with the horrors of physical death, and that the tradition of the Perilous Chapel, which survives in the Grail romances in confused and contaminated form, was a reminiscence of the test for this lower initiation. (*RR*, p. 182, Weston's emphasis)[20]

There are certainly lots of "notices" of the horrors of physical death in *The Waste Land*. Those charnel images are usually connected to the Grail Quest and the Tarot pack in commentaries on the poem—those elements that Eliot later said were targets of a wild goose chase. My

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rereading of Weston suggests that they might be better construed as elements of an initiation ritual, for that is how Weston construes them.

The double nature of the supposed initiation is also important to my argument. The lower Mystery of life is the one to which she attaches charnel images, but it seems that it can also take erotic or at least copulative forms. The higher Mystery cannot be expressed directly, for its achievement involves being "made one with God," but its exoteric form is a sacred marriage or *hieros gamos*. Moreover, even the lower Mystery has two forms: an exoteric or public form and an esoteric, secret, or occult form:

> The Exoteric side of the cult gives us the Human, the Folk-lore, elements—the suffering King; the Waste Land; the effect upon the Folk; the task that lies before the hero; the group of Grail symbols. The Esoteric side provides us with the Mystic Meal, the Food of Life, connected in some mysterious way with a Vessel which is the centre of the cult; the combination of that vessel with a Weapon, a combination bearing a well-known "generative" significance; a double initiation into the source of the lower and higher spheres of Life. (*RR*, pp. 158–59)

The Grail legend, then, is an exoteric record of the double initiation whose esoteric dimensions would seem to involve some version of the *hieros gamos* or "divine marriage" as the expression of "union with God." The lower initiation into the Mystery of life is esoterically expressed, she says, by the Mystic Meal.

To date, commentary on *The Waste Land* has explored only the exoteric and legendary aspect of the cult—the Grail legend and its fertility cult formulation in which sexual impotence of the Fisher King proves to be bad for the crops, leaving the land waste, and requiring a young, virile Questing Knight to put things right through heroic acts and marriage to some legitimate female—either the King's daughter or his consort. Some critics—notably Grover Smith—have also placed great emphasis on the Tarot deck of cards. The following discussion should not be construed as contradicting commentary which relies on this exoteric understanding of the legendary material. Clearly the poem has lots of waste-land imagery—even a title drawing attention to the exoteric aspects of Weston's secret cult—and the Tarot pack is clearly invoked. However, the poem was not called "The Waste Land" when Eliot gave it to Pound, and it was then much less unified under the rubric of the Grail legend. My claim is that if we look at Pound's editing, we will find that it tends to remove the esoteric or mystical elements of the original draft—particularly the connection of eros and revelation

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implied in the *hieros gamos* topos.[21] When the poem issues from the hand of Pound, sexuality no longer has a transcendental element, but is almost totally barren—spiritually and emotionally as well as progenitively.

If we keep in mind Weston's assertion that initiation into the lower Mystery of life "would probably consist in contact with the horrors of death" the pertinence of the original Conrad epigraph is evident:

> "Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge? He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision,—he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath—
> 'The horror! the horror!' " (*F*, p. 3)

The exchange between Pound and Eliot on this passage is worth citing:

> *Pound:* "I doubt if Conrad is weighty enough to stand the citation."
> *Eliot:* "Do you mean not use the Conrad quote or simply not put Conrad's name to it? It is much the most appropriate I can find, and somewhat elucidative."
> *Pound:* "Do as you like about Conrad; who am I to grudge him his laurel crown?" (*F*, p. 125, n. 1)

As we know, Eliot did remove the Conrad passage and substituted a fragment from the *Satyricon* of Petronius in which the Sibyl of Cumae is said to long for death. The "new" epigraph stresses the motif of prophecy more than that of an encounter with the Otherworld, which is inescapably invoked by the Conrad passage. In Kurtz's case, of course, there was no initiation, only death—unless we wish to count his participation in "unspeakable rites" as some sort of initiation. On the reading I am suggesting here, Kurtz's report on the experience of death would be a model of the modern, doomed, unredeemed encounter with death and the Otherworld. He does not get past the Horror. Weston's initiand also encounters horrors. His surmounting of these horrors—diminished to the Chapel Perilous in the legend—is a necessary prelude to the glorious revelation of the Otherworld.

If we turn to the draft version of *The Waste Land,* it is clear that the contemporary London "Nightown" episode running some fifty-five lines with which the draft version began, fits this lower initiation into the Mystery of life. The first-person speaker is given a bath and a meal (an exoteric form of Weston's lower Mystery) by the Madame of the brothel instead of the girl he asks for (an ironic and exoteric form of the *hieros gamos*) because in her opinion he is too drunk. The episode ends

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with the speaker walking home at dawn. The deletion of this opening episode of "The Burial of the Dead" removes a sexual episode devoid of the despair, guilt, violence, and indifference that characterize the descriptions of sexual encounters that survive Pound's blue pencil. Certainly there is no sign of any redemptive or transcendental element in the elided episode; but neither does it fit the barren fertility-cult motif thought to govern the canonical poem. In short, its removal alters the thematic thrust of the poem, and not just its length and stylistic integrity as commentary has largely argued.

The sexual episode in Part One that does survive Pound's blue pencil is the cryptic incident of the hyacinth girl. The speaker who has returned from the hyacinth garden with the girl, her arms full and her hair wet, confesses:

> I could not
> Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
> Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
> Looking into the heart of light, the silence.
> (*F*, lines 92–95)

These remarks have commonly been interpreted as the confession of some kind of spiritual paralysis. I, for one, have never been happy with that reading because the tone and mood of the passage are positive, but have heretofore been at a loss for an alternative. Weston's connection of the initiation into the higher Mystery with erotic experience—a traditional enough connection—provides a persuasive alternative interpretation. The speaker's dumbness, blindness, and blankness are indexes of the supreme revelation he has just experienced. He has looked into "the heart of light, the silence." That is to say, he has beheld the divine, has seen the Otherworld. He is dumb, blind, and mindless because he is completely overwhelmed, not because he is suffering from abulia like the other denizens of the necropolitan waste land. This speaker is "dead to the world," as the charismatic Christians express their state after their parallel experience of palingenesis or being "born again." This incident would have been the contrary to Kurtz's death, where there is no light only darkness and horror. Kurtz looked not into the heart of light, but into the heart of darkness. In this way the Conrad epigraph was "somewhat elucidative."

"A Game of Chess" is only lightly revised, and most of the revisions are stylistic or serve consistency and the like. The two most substantive revisions do not seem to have been at Pound's request. The original title "In the Cage" must have been an allusion to the Petronius citation, even though it was not cited in the draft as we have it. The other alteration

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was the suppression of the answer to the question, " 'What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?' " (*F*, line 44): "Carrying / Away the little light dead people" (*F*, lines 45–46). Valerie Eliot informs us that this line is taken from Dante's account of Paolo and Francesca, and thus it could be construed as at least invoking Weston's motif of an encounter with the Otherworld through eros. Of course, Dante's lovers are damned, not apotheosized. In any event, Eliot decided to remove this invocation of the Otherworld from the section and to retain only the speaker's recollection of the hyacinth garden, an allusion to *The Tempest*, and the query, " 'Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?' " (*F*, line 51).

Had he kept the Conrad epigraph and the Dantescan allusion, the Weston motif of a transcendental experience of the Otherworld achieved through some variety of erotic experience would have been more readily discernible. The questions, "Are you alive or not? Is there nothing in your head?" moreover would have had greater resonance for they would have invoked both the topos of abulia as it does now, and the topos of vision through its echo of the hyacinth garden episode. However, the form in which the poem saw the light of day made it almost impossible to interpret the Hyacinth incident as diametrically opposed to the other forms of paralysis invoked in the poem.

As the poem was published, the fertility-cult understanding of sexuality seemed the appropriate interpretive device to apply. On this view male impotence is an index of the failure of natural fecundity, and a symbol of spiritual paralysis. The failure of natural fecundity, in turn, leads naturally to charnel images; for vegetable death is a symbol of human death, and, further, on a naturalistic view, leads to starvation and death. Thus the symbolism of the poem lines up neatly with a naturalistic interpretation in the best modern way. One difficulty with this standard reading of *The Waste Land* is that most of the sexual episodes either narrated or alluded to do not fit the pattern of male impotence. Tereus, the young man carbuncular, Lil's husband, and the loitering heirs of city directors seem perfectly potent—and Lil at least is also fertile. It has been necessary just to ignore this failure of match between the poem and its alleged mythical parallel on the grounds, I suppose, that spiritual or emotional failures have systematically displaced merely physical ones.

No such maneuver is necessary if we read the mythical parallel as an initiation rite instead of just a Grail Quest. Of course, the Grail Quest motif does not disappear. It is unmistakably present in the text of the poem and in Eliot's notes. However, Weston tells us that the Grail

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legend is a distorted and fragmentary survival of a forgotten initiation into the Mystery of life involving a frightening encounter with death, and into the Mystery of death involving an erotically formulated encounter with the Divine. On this reading we do not need to choose between a Grail motif and an initiation motif, but rather see them as exoteric and esoteric aspects of the same sacred Mystery—a Mystery, moreover, which Weston tells us is not known to the authors of the Grail stories, and therefore need not be known to the author of *The Waste Land* either. On this model the failure of the sexual encounter registered in the poem is exactly a spiritual failure and not the sexual dysfunction that the fertility parallel requires.

The male speaker in the poem *does* seem to suffer from some sexual dysfunction. If he is interpreted as the questing knight, his apparent impotence is a puzzle. If, on the other hand, he is interpreted as the initiand in a rite leading to a divine revelation through an *hieros gamos*, then his shyness and inactivity are appropriate. Moreover, the charnel images scattered throughout the poem become not just indexes of impotence, but way stations along the initiand's route to revelation—a revelation that is not achieved in *The Waste Land* any more than it is in any of the surviving Grail legends. Within the palingenetic tradition—which is the mainstream occult tradition—one must pass through death in order to encounter the divine revelation. Being born again involves "dying" first, including all of the fear and loathing that we associate with death. Weston's argument is that palingenesis leads only to a lower initiation—into the Mystery of life—and that the higher initiation into the Mystery of death is achieved through eros. Hence the speaker's sexual problems can be read as spiritual ones, while the sexual potency of the other denizens of the poem can be read as a complete, animal failure to recognize the transcendental potential of eros.

There are other elements of the draft Eliot gave to Pound that support this reading of sexual activity under the rubric of the *hieros gamos*. One of the least ambiguous is in the Fresca episode that Pound persuaded Eliot to excise:

> Fresca! in other time or place had been
> A meek and lowly weeping Magdalene;
> More sinned against than sinning, bruised and marred,
> The lazy laughing Jenny of the bard.
> (The same eternal and consuming itch
> Can make a martyr, or plain simple bitch).
> (*F*, lines 42–47)

Fresca is just an empty-headed party girl. These lines tell us that in other

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times and places, sexual appetite has led to some kinds of transcendence: the sainthood of the prostitute Mary Magdalene, the muse-like inspiration that Rossetti's Jenny (Elizabeth Siddal) brought to the Pre-Raphaelites, the martyrdom that Salome's dance earned John the Baptist. However one reads these lines, it is difficult to make them fit the fertility-cult paradigm. They seem to express a disgust with sexuality, and have been construed as symptomatic of Eliot's personal sexual difficulties. If we have in mind Weston's esoteric understanding of eros, these lines can be read less tendentiously as registering the loss of sanctity suffered by eros and sexuality in modern culture and society. Weston's esoteric Mystery of *hieros gamos* has more in common with Christian sexual phobias than it does with the emotional and spiritual indifference of the Frescas and young men carbuncular that populate Eliot's waste land, for it sanctifies sexuality. Taboos are always attached to the sacred, not to the profane. Indeed, the sexual encounters in the poem largely exemplify such a loss of sanctity rather more clearly than the sexual dysfunction required by the fertility-cult paradigm.

Another passage in the Fresca episode alludes to the *hieros gamos* between Anchises and Aphrodite which led to her impregnation and the birth of Aeneas. The following lines are in apposition with Fresca and are much revised:

> To Aeneas, in an unfamiliar place,
> Appeared his mother, with an altered face,
> He knew the goddess by her smooth celestial pace.
> So the close rabble identify a goddess or a star.
> In silent rapture worship from afar.
> (*F*, p. 29, lines 18–20)

The satirical intention and mocking tone of this passage do not remove the pertinence of the motif of transcendent potential of eros upon which the convention of the *hieros gamos* depends. Pound's blue-penciling of the whole section no doubt removed some indifferent verse, but it also removed an attention to the motif of eros that fits Weston's esoteric initiation rite better than the exoteric Grail Legend.

Pound persuaded Eliot to drop the long first-person narrative of a sea disaster with which "Death by Water" opened in the draft version. These lines do not seem as objectionable on stylistic grounds as the Fresca episode, and we have no record of what Pound objected to in them. Clearly they do not fit the Grail parallel at all well. Indeed they do not even fit the esoteric *hieros gamos* parallel well. They present a first-person account of death by drowning, and conclude with the lines: "And if Another knows, I know not, / Who only know that there is no

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more noise now" (*F*, lines 81–82). These lines are reminiscent of those in Part I spoken to the hyacinth girl. In both cases we have a report on an encounter with the Otherworld. This excised one, however, is on a *palingenetic* or death and rebirth model, rather than an erotic model, although the speaker, like Prufrock, does see:

> Three women leaning forward, with white hair
> Streaming behind, who sang above the wind
> A song that charmed my senses, while I was
> Frightened beyond fear, horrified past horror, calm,
> (Nothing was real) for, I thought, now, when
> I like, I can wake up and end the dream.
> (*F*, lines 67–72)

These lines as well would have picked up the Conrad epigraph, and through the title, "Death by Water," would have directed the reader to the Christian palingenetic rite of Baptism, a rite in which the "initiand" (the infant) is "drowned" and reborn to a new life. As the poem was published we are left with the drowned Phoenician sailor who is a poor candidate for a palingenetic revelation parallel to the erotic revelation of Part One. In short, elision of this passage removes not only the motif of palingenesis, but also the whole topos of transcendence and revelation. Pound seems to have sought to remove all such redeeming features from the poem. Eliot, we must presume, was not so antipathetic to the topos of transcendence, but was persuaded to remove this palingenetic episode in order to achieve greater focus and concentration in the poem. Valerie Eliot tells us that her husband was depressed by Pound's negative reaction to the shipwreck passage and offered to omit Phlebas as well. Pound replied:

> I do advise keeping Phlebas. In fact I more'n advise. Phlebas is an integral part of the poem; the card pack introduces him, the drowned phoen. sailor. And he is needed ABSOlootly where he is. Must stay in. (*F*, p. 61, n. 2)

From this it seems that Pound was giving greater prominence to the Tarot pack as an apparently structural device than to the thematic element of the encounter with death within a transcendent or palingenetic framework. As the poem was published, the death of Phlebas suggests perhaps the transmigration of souls for he "passed the stages of his age and youth / Entering the whirlpool," but only very weakly evokes the notion of rebirth to a higher life, which was inescapably evoked by the shipwreck account.

Both the palingenetic and erotic representations of transcendence found in Weston's characterization of the ancient initiation rite are

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largely removed from *The Waste Land*, at Pound's instigation, leaving a poem depicting a bleak, hopeless, wasted world occupied by the spiritually dead. Although one should not make too much of the fragments Valerie Eliot has published together with *The Waste Land* drafts, it is worth noting that "The Death of St. Narcissus," "Exequy," "The Death of the Duchess," "Elegy," and "Dirge" are all poems of death overpassed in one way or another. They all fall within the horizon of palingenesis. It is true that, properly speaking, palingenesis involves a death to *this* life and rebirth to a *higher* life—whether that be Heaven (or the Otherworld as Weston calls it), or simply the transformed life here on earth of the charismatic, "born again" Christian. However, the experience of the Otherworld also appears in our tradition in darker, perhaps more primitive forms. One of the better known of these is the story of Lazarus, which Eliot invokes in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" where Prufrock imagines himself saying: "'I am Lazarus, come from the dead, / Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all.'"

Weston is quite specific on the issue of the palingenetic experience as both possible and frightening:

> I believe it is to be essentially a Mystery tradition; the Otherworld is not a myth, but a reality, and in all ages there have been souls who have been willing to brave the great adventure, and to risk all for the chance of bringing back with them some assurance of the future life. Naturally these ventures passed into tradition with the men who risked them. The early races of men became semi-mythic, their beliefs, their experiences, receded into a land of mist, where their figures assumed fantastic outlines, and the record of their deeds departed more and more widely from historic accuracy. (*RR*, p. 186)

Prufrock, of course, was not one of these souls, but he does invoke the tradition of spiritual heroism to which Weston refers in his allusions to Lazarus and John the Baptist. Christ himself is the type of this hero: he dies, descends "into the Netherworld, passing through the abodes of the Lost, finally reaching Paradise, and returning to earth after Three Days."[22]

Eliot must have been receptive to this component of Weston's book. The fragments cited above, as well as "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," were all written long before he read *From Ritual to Romance*, and they all invoke the perfectly mainstream tradition of the encounter with death being revelatory. The Christian mystic tradition is just that, a tradition of the revelation of the beyond, of the Otherworld. The denizens of Eliot's poetry of the period up to and including *The Waste*

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Land, of course, do not achieve any revelation, but they feel its lack. Weston's book explains the failure of revelation in the modern world in a manner that is useful to Eliot precisely because it is not mainstream, and not Christian. That is to say, Weston's arguments for a lost Mystery religion—like the Grail Legend itself and the Tarot pack—provide a framework for the poem, a framework that is just as factitious as that of the *Odyssey* for Joyce's *Ulysses* or Yeats's historical cones and cycles for his poetry.[23]

If one grant credence for a moment to these arguments for revelation on a palingenetic model—that is, a revelation following upon some kind of death experience—the last section of *The Waste Land* ought somehow to invoke or represent the Otherworld, even if only ironically. It seems to me that both the title and the content of Part V fit this pattern better than they do the Grail Quest pattern. The title, "What the Thunder Said," surely suggests that we will hear the voice of God. Of course all we hear is the thunder, but it does render to us a cryptic and Hindu revelation.

The opening lines of Part V (which escaped Pound's blue pencil virtually unscathed) evoke the central palingenetic story of Christianity–Christ's passion and death:

> After the torchlight on sweaty faces,
> After the frosty silence in the gardens
> After the agony in stony places
> The shouting and the crying
> Prison and palace and reverberation
> Of thunder of spring over distant mountains;
> He who was living is now dead,
> We who were living are now dying
> With a little patience.
>
> (*F*, lines 1–9)

Surely these lines describe Christ's arrest in the garden of Gethsemane, his scourging and trial, his death, and the portents of thunder and earthquake that revealed who he was—God's son—but not that he would triumph and return from the grave on Easter Sunday. The poem does not move on through the full palingenesis. There is no resurrection, only death and perhaps a descent. In Grail terms the poem stops in the Chapel Perilous; in Christian terms, on Easter Saturday while Christ is, according to tradition, harrowing Hell. The reader is left, as the apostles were, doubting, even in despair with God, the Savior dead, and only ambiguous and obscure messages left, typified by the voice of the thunder.

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In the note to Part V Eliot says there are three themes: "the journey to Emmaus, the approach to the Chapel Perilous (see Miss Weston's book), and the present decay of eastern Europe." The first theme is a test case for the argument I am putting forward here. In the Gospel according to St. Luke, the risen Christ appears to Cleopas and Simon on Easter Sunday as they walk to Emmaus disbelieving the accounts of Christ's empty tomb. However, they fail to recognize him until he later breaks bread with them: "And when he had sat down with them at table, he took bread and said the blessing; he broke the bread and offered it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight" (Luke, 24:30–31). On the road to Emmaus the apostles are still in despair, ignorance, and darkness, and cannot even recognize the risen Christ who walks beside them. The revelation has not yet come to them, although it is at hand. Similarly the quester in the Chapel Perilous is at the low point of the whole quest, undergoing the terrors of death, not the bliss of revelation. It is in the chapter entitled "The Perilous Chapel" that Weston is most specific about encounters with the Otherworld.

It is difficult to resist picking up Eliot's note to line 424 where he recommends Weston's chapter on the Fisher King as an appropriate gloss for the lines:

> I sat upon the shore
> Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
> Shall I at least set my lands in order?

If we consult that chapter, we find that it is mostly about the mystic meal—a fish meal—and not at all about the restoration of the wasted land by the revived potency of the king. The following summarizes the chapter's argument: "But at certain mystic banquets priests and initiates partook of this otherwise forbidden food, in the belief that they thus partook of the flesh of the goddess" (*RR*, p. 133). The Fisher King himself is, as it were, the provisioner of this mystic meal and is "not merely a deeply symbolic figure, but the essential centre of the whole cult, a being semi-divine, semi-human, standing between his people and land, and the unseen forces which control their destiny" (*RR*, p. 136). In short he is a prototype of Christ, and the Emmaus episode, ending as it does with a meal, underlines their mystical equivalence. However, in *The Waste Land* he is still fishing. He has not yet "saved" his people—just as the risen Christ has not yet been recognized on the road to Emmaus.

Finally the line, "These fragments I have shored against my ruins"—whether spoken by the Fisher King, a quester, an initiand, or

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some other—can refer either to the poem itself, or to the fragments of religious belief that are encrusted in the poem like raisins in a loaf of bread. If we adopt the latter hypothesis, Weston once again appears relevant. In the Introduction she writes:

> The more closely one studies pre-Christian Theology, the more strongly one is impressed with the deeply, and daringly, spiritual character of its speculations, and the more doubtful it appears that such teaching can depend upon the unaided processes of human thought, or can have been evolved from such germs as we find among the supposedly "primitive" people, such as *e.g.*, the Australian tribes. Are they really primitive? Or are we dealing, not with the primary elements of religion, but with the *disjecta membra* of a vanished civilization? Certain it is that so far as historical evidence goes our earlier records point to the recognition of a spiritual, not of a material, origin of the human race; the Sumerian and Babylonian Psalms were not composed by men who believed themselves the descendants of "witchetty grubs." (*RR*, p. 7)

Weston is, of course, reflecting the occult belief that humans are the somewhat debased descendants of angels, demigods, heroes, titans, or whatever super race one might wish to imagine.

I do not suppose for a moment that Eliot shared such a silly belief. What I do suppose is that he wanted and expected readers of *The Waste Land* to discover the poem's relation to Weston's fantasies. Weston's book is a symptom of the spiritual decay that Eliot's poem—on any reading—evokes and bemoans. There is no reason to suppose that Eliot regarded it as a credible explanation of that decay. The very goofiness of Weston's thesis is, I think, an important point in the allusion. Here I find myself in agreement with Kenner's later position on Weston's relevance to *The Waste Land*:

> The situation is plainly impossible; the poem that speaks to it is plainly grotesque. What it set out to do, as a sonnet-writer sets out to write a sonnet, was to assemble the heap of broken images a cultivated person—the kind Virginia Woolf found fit to talk to—would have floating in his head; to make a compendium of these . . . . Availing itself of existing eloquences, admired eloquences, such as Shakespeare's, it stirred souls, or hoped to stir them, into asking questions: questions we are sure to address to the poem itself—what on earth does it mean?—though the force of such a question ought to strike back to the hallowed materials themselves . . . . The poem is a grotesquerie, often nearly a parody; Eliot even told Arnold Bennett that yes, the notes were a skit, but not more so than some of the poem itself.[24]

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That is to say, Weston provided Eliot with a framework that permitted the interpretation and overlap of Christian, classical, and medieval legendary material in an "ordered" if not orderly manner—which interpenetration yields a rhetorical structure that mimes the confused spiritual state of modern man and (most probably) of the author of *The Waste Land*.

As I suggested at the outset none of the argument or evidence presented here requires rejection or even correction of the consensual reading of *The Waste Land*. It does not do so because the pertinence of the occult Weston bears on the original draft submitted to Ezra Pound more than on the canonical poem. This discussion does, however, challenge the consensual dismissal of the Weston book's relevance—and, by implication, the axiom of textual autonomy which has been responsible in considerable part for critical neglect of *From Ritual to Romance*. Furthermore, the fact that Weston's book presented an occult view of religion and history is not without consequences for literary scholarship. In the first place, recognition of this fact leads to a more plausible account of the principles governing Pound's editing of the poem than any put forward thus far. My argument also accounts for some elements of the poem's obscurity on historical rather than thematic or rhetorical grounds—that is, that the obscurity arises in part from the somewhat conflicting thematic biases of Pound and Eliot. It may also help to illuminate that obscurity a little, but I make no large claims for the interpretive felicity of the reassessment of *From Ritual to Romance* offered here. (Although it might be claimed that the prominence assigned by Eliot to Tiresias makes more sense if the poem appeals to the paradigm of an initiation rather than a quest. Tiresias has no role in Quest literature, but his residence in the Underworld, and his complete sexual experience make him a suitable hierophant for an initiation into the Mysteries of life and death.)

More generally, the claim that *The Waste Land* self-consciously drew upon occult sources—if granted—has interesting and potentially important consequences for the literary history of modernism. It may be that high modernism as represented by the work of Yeats, Joyce, Pound, and Eliot has closer ties to the themes, subject matter, and interpretive principles found everywhere in the contemporaneous occult than has been heretofore suspected. Of course this last supposition is only that. Its truth or falsity must wait upon further study and research.

I have been assisted in the research for this essay by Demetrés Tryphonopoulos.

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who is compiling a data base under my direction on relations between known occultists and prominent artists—primarily in London between 1885 and 1935.

[1] Of my publications on Pound and the *Cantos,* the following are most relevant: *A Light from Eleusis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979); "Economics and Eleusis," *San Jose Studies,* 12 (Fall 1986), 58–66.

[2] For Pound and Mead see my study *A Light from Eleusis,* and *Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespeare, Their Letters, 1909–1914,* ed. A. Walton Litz (New York: New Directions, 1984). For Lewis and Hulme see Michael H. Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984), p. 75. Both Hulme and Lewis went to the front in the following year. Lewis survived the war, but Hulme did not.

[3] For the relation between Yeats and Mead see Virginia Moore, *The Unicorn: William Butler Yeats' Search for Reality* (New York: Macmillan, 1954), esp. pp. 105–12.

[4] Jessie L. Weston, *From Ritual to Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1920), p. viii. Page references are to the 1957 Anchor Books reprint and are cited parenthetically in the text as *RR.*

[5] For the book's reputation among folklorists see Margaret J. C. Reid, *The Arthurian Legend* (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1938; rpt., New York, Barnes & Noble, 1981).

[6] F. O. Matthiessen, *The Achievement of T. S. Eliot* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1958 [first published, 1935]), p. 50.

[7] Cleanth Brooks, "*The Waste Land:* Critique of the Myth," from *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1939), pp. 136–72.

[8] Hugh Kenner, *The Invisible Poet* (New York: Obolensky, 1959), pp. 151–52.

[9] Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1971), pp. 109–10, 437–44.

[10] T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts,* ed. Valerie Eliot (London: Faber, 1971), p. 146. All references to the poem will be to this edition, cited parenthetically as *F.*

Note that Eliot misidentifies the publisher as Macmillan rather than the correct Cambridge. That error is corrected in *Collected Poems.*

It is worth noting that Eliot attributes the vegetation ceremony elements to Frazer, not Weston.

[11] T. S. Eliot, "The Frontiers of Criticism," in *On Poetry and Poets* (New York: Noonday Press, 1961). This essay was originally delivered as the Gideon Seymour Lecture at the University of Minnesota in 1956.

[12] Hugh Kenner's suggestion that *The Waste Land*'s relation to Weston's book was parodic perhaps comes closest to the argument offered here of the earlier influential assessments. See Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era,* p. 443.

[13] John Senior, *The Way Down and Out: The Occult in Symbolist Literature* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1959), pp. 176, 177.

[14] See James Edwin Miller, *T. S. Eliot's Personal Waste Land* (University Park: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1977).

[15] Tom Gibbons, "*The Waste Land* Tarot Identified," *Journal of Modern Literature,* 2 (Nov. 1972), 560–65, 564.

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[16] Grover Smith, *The Waste Land* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983), pp. 88–97.

[17] Jessie Weston, *The Quest of the Holy Grail* (London: G. Bell, 1913; rpt. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1964), p. 96. Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text as *QHG*.

[18] For a discussion of Pound's use of this historical fantasy in the *Cantos* see my study, *A Light from Eleusis*.

[19] Of course, I am aware that neither New Criticism, Structuralism, Post-structuralism, nor New Historicism permits one to speak of authorial intentions. However, I can think of no other convenient way to characterize the relevance of Eliot's notes. That they *have* some relevance seems to me irrefutable, and the fact of their relevance is all that I require.

[20] Her use of the term "astral plane" here clearly marks her as an occultist, and even a Blavatskian occultist. It seems unlikely to me that Eliot even noticed such a hard-core occultist remark. Certainly there is no echo of astral experiences such as metempsychosis in *The Waste Land*.

[21] Christian Neoplatonism, of course, produced a literary—and a devotional—convention in which human relations with the divine are expressed in erotic terms. Eliot was well aware of this tradition, and exploits it in some of his verse. The *hieros gamos* tradition that Weston invokes, however, is not Christian and imagines—as she says—a *physical* contact between the human and the divine. In short, we have here a more primitive and carnal paradigm of revelation than that found in Christian Neoplatonism—something closer to that described in Yeats's sonnet "Leda and the Swan," than to Donne's Divine Sonnets.

[22] I am citing Weston's description of *The Purgatory of St. Patrick* (*RR*, p. 184). She does not draw attention to the congruence between this story of St. Patrick and the story of Christ's death and resurrection, even though that is obviously the model for the legend.

[23] I include Yeats with some trepidation, for the question of his attitude to the occult dimensions he borrows is far from clear. Certainly he did not dismiss the occult, and probably took much of it quite seriously. In 1921 he had not yet published *A Vision*, but he had long been using occult material in his poetry. Eliot invokes Yeats as well as Joyce in his famous review of *Ulysses* where he discusses the "mythological method," a method that *The Waste Land* has long been thought to exemplify.

[24] Kenner, *The Pound Era*, p. 443.

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CONTRIBUTORS

ELIZABETH S. BELL, Chair of the English Department, University of South Carolina at Aiken, has published on various modern and contemporary fiction topics and is the editor of *Words That Must Somehow Be Said: The Selected Essays of Kay Boyle.*

DOROTHY BRYANT is the author of eight novels including *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* and *Confessions of Madame Psyche.*

SUZANNE CLARK, Assistant Professor of English at Oregon State University, has written various articles on gender, culture, and writing. Her current projects include work on Bernard Malamud and a study of women writers and modernist literature.

RUBY COHN is Professor of Comparative Drama at the University of California, Davis. Her latest book is *From Desire to Godot: Pocket Theater of Postwar Paris.*

MALCOLM COWLEY, poet, essayist, editor, critic, and literary historian, is the author of *Exile's Return,* perhaps the most widely read chronicle of the 1920s, and *A Second Flowering: Days and Works of the Lost Generation.* He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and served as chancellor from 1967 to 1976.

HELGA EINSELE, former Governor of a women's prison, is Professor of Criminology (retired) at the University of Frankfurt am Main, Federal Republic of Germany. Her piece in this issue was translated by her daughter, NELE LÖW-BEER, a journalist and translator.

JIM FITZMAURICE is a vice-president at Scott, Foresman and Company. His latest project has been to oversee the development of literature anthologies for elementary-school children.

IAN FRANCKENSTEIN, son to Kay Boyle and her husband Baron Joseph von Franckenstein, was born in New York in 1943. He is a graduate of San Francisco State University, where he majored in music, and is currently pursuing a career as a radio broadcaster and actor in the Bay Area.

HERBERT GOLD's most recent books are *A Girl of Forty* and *Dreaming,*

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novels, and *Cohorts: 27 Stories*. He is five feet ten inches high and has a disposition which is occasionally kindly but often not.

DORIS GRUMBACH is book critic for National Public Radio and author of *Chamber Music, The Missing Person, The Ladies,* and most recently *The Magician's Girl.*

ALAN M. F. GUNN, Professor Emeritus of English, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, has published *The Mirror of Love: A Reinterpretation of the "Roman de la Rose,"* studies and reviews on medieval and Scottish literature, and privately distributed lyrical and meditative poems.

BURTON HATLEN is Professor of English at the University of Maine. He edits *Sagetrieb,* a journal devoted to scholarship and poets in the Imagist and Objectivist traditions, and he has published articles in many journals, including *College English, Ironwood,* and the *Minnesota Review.* A collection of his poetry, *I Wanted to Tell You,* was published in 1988 by the National Poetry Foundation.

JAMES LAUGHLIN is the publisher of New Directions Books. He brought out a collection of Kay Boyle's poems, *A Glad Day,* in 1938. Reprints of *Monday Night* and *Thirty Stories* followed. Most recently, New Directions published *Life Being the Best and Other Stories* in 1988 and will republish Kay Boyle's 1936 novel, *Death of a Man,* in 1989.

LEO E. LITWAK, Professor of English at San Francisco State University, is author with Herbert Wilner of *College Days in Earthquake Country* and author of the novels *To the Hanging Gardens* and *Waiting for the News.*

KENNETH D. MCCORMICK is editor for Bantam/Doubleday/Dell and Franklin Library.

HENRY MCGUCKIN is Professor of Speech and Communication Studies at San Francisco State University.

IAN S. MACNIVEN teaches English at the State University of New York Maritime College. His edition of *The Durrell-Miller Letters, 1935–1980* has just appeared, and he is working on a biocritical study of Kay Boyle.

JESSICA MITFORD has written a number of exposés on such varied topics as television executives, Bennet Cerf's Famous Writers School, a "fat

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farm" for wealthy women, and the funeral industry (*The American Way of Death*, 1963). Her most recent book, an anthology of her articles written over 22 years, is *Poison Penmanship: The Gentle Art of Muckraking*.

DEBORAH DENENHOLZ MORSE, Assistant Professor of English at the College of William and Mary, received her Ph.D. in 1986 from Northwestern University, where she was awarded the Alumnae Fellowship for Women. She is the author of *Women in Trollope's Palliser Novels* (UMI Research Press, 1987) and currently is working on a book-length study of Elizabeth Taylor's fiction.

KATE MOSES is an editor with North Point Press. She lives with her family in Berkeley.

HOWARD NEMEROV's most recent books are *The Oak in the Acorn: On Remembrance of Things Past and on Teaching Proust, Who Will Never Learn* (LSU Press, 1987) and *War Stories: Poems About Long Ago and Now* (University of Chicago Press, 1987). He is Poet Laureate of the United States.

RON PADGETT is a poet and translator whose most recent volume is *Among the Blacks*. He is also the editor of *The Complete Poems of Edwin Denby* and is publications director of Teachers and Writers Collaborative.

MORRIS RENEK's sixth novel will be on the male executive of the 1980s.

WILLIAM L. SHIRER, journalist, historian, and author of 13 books, has known Kay Boyle since his days as a reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*, Paris edition, in the 1920s. He lived and traveled throughout Europe from 1925 to 1940. His observations form the basis of his two bestsellers: *Berlin Diary* (1941) and *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, which won the National Book Award in 1961.

ROBERT C. SMITH is Reference Librarian at Sierra College near Sacramento, California, where he teaches Library Research. He taught English at San Francisco State University, where he was Kay Boyle's teaching assistant. His short stories have been published in *Liberal Context* and the *Inquirer*. He is active in the Sacramento peace movement and advises the Students United for Peace.

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ERIC SOLOMON teaches English and American Literature at San Francisco State University and is currently completing a book, *Jews, Baseball, and the American Novel.*

SANDRA WHIPPLE SPANIER, Assistant Professor of English at Oregon State University, is the author of *Kay Boyle: Artist and Activist* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1986; Paragon House, 1988) and edited and introduced Kay Boyle's most recent book, *Life Being the Best and Other Stories* (New Directions, 1988).

JAMES STERN, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, is the author of four volumes of short stories and of *The Hidden Damage* (Harcourt Brace), a 400-page report for the U.S. Government on the state of Germany toward the end of World War II.

STUDS TERKEL has hosted an interview show on radio station WFMT, Chicago, since 1945 and is author of *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression* and *Working: People Talk about What They Do All Day and How They Feel about What They Do.* He received the Pulitzer Prize in nonfiction in 1985 for *"The Good War": An Oral History of World War II.*

EDWARD M. UEHLING is Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of English at Valparaiso University. He frequently teaches a seminar, Images of War, and has proposed an NEH summer seminar in classic American war fiction. He has presented and published papers on teaching writing and writing across the curriculum.

APPLE VAIL, born to Kay Boyle in Paris, 1929, lived in Miami with her husband and three children from 1957 until her death in 1988. She was known for her work in acrylics and ceramic tile, such as her 1977 mural in the Miami Women's Detention Center and her painting titled "Mi-Lay, the Mind of Lieutenant Calley," which convey strong and unequivocal social messages. Her major work, "Starcock," depicting a spiritual journey through the complexities of life, was accompanied by music in a 1986 production in New York by the Mabou Mimes Company. Her strikingly original short stories have appeared in the *American Voice,* and she was working on a novel at the time of her death.

KATHE VAIL, Kay Boyle's third daughter, was born in Innsbruck, Austria, in 1934, and after living with the family in New York from 1941 to 1946, married and has lived in Paris since 1946. She studied

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acting at the Conservatoire and played Juliet in Peter Ustinov's "Romanoff and Juliet" during its several-year run in England. Since 1950 she has worked as an adapter of American films (dubbing and titling) into French, as well as other foreign films into English. She lives with her three children in a small country village outside Paris.

SHARON WALSH, Kay Boyle's first child, was born in Nice, France, in 1927, after the death of her father, poet and publisher Ernest Walsh. After spending four years in New York with the family during World War II, she married a French Resistance fighter and has lived in and worked in France. She has had several group shows of her paintings in Italy and Paris, and two one-woman shows recently in Paris, while working also as archivist for the Ministère de l'Education Nationale since 1962.

GEORGE WICKES is Professor of English at the University of Oregon, which is located 20 miles north of Cottage Grove. His books include *Americans in Paris* and *The Amazon of Letters*.

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Kay Boyle

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Introduction

Kay Boyle: "No Past Tense Permitted"

Sandra Whipple Spanier

I'll not discuss death with you by any name, however
gently, soberly, you ask.
When the spectacle of it comes downstage, well off-
center, "white hair,
White nightgown, white socks," let humor lead the
onslaught decked out
In coat-of-mail, broadsword or flash-light in gauntlet,
no matter which.
Buckle on uproarious wit, lower the visor so that no
convulsed member of the audience
Glimpse the whitening eye or lip a-quiver with palsy.
Then are we authorized to dance,
Hand in clanking hand (though two continents, one
ocean intervene): suffered to sing,
But not with the voice of mourning dove in the tearful
willow grieving,
"Seul, pas seul. Seul, pas seul," but between strophes
preening, grooming,
The few remaining feathers of our iridescence, lovely
they were—but stop the music!
No past tense permitted either here or there.

—from "A Poem for Samuel Beckett"

In April, 1986, at his home in Chicago, Studs Terkel told an interviewer, "When I think of Kay Boyle, I think of someone who has borne witness to the most traumatic and shattering events of our century: not simply this particular era, but of the whole twentieth century. Starting early. Both as a creative artist as well as being there."[1]

There, indeed, she has always been. She was in Paris in the Twenties among the expatriate artists and writers now known as the Lost Generation, and in 1929 she put her name to a manifesto calling for the "Revolution of the Word." (Drafted by *transition* editor Eugene Jolas

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and published in the magazine in 1929, it proclaimed, among other things, "Narrative is not mere anecdote, but the projection of a metamorphosis of reality"; "The writer expresses. He does not communicate"; and "The plain reader be damned.") She was in Austria in the 1930s as the Nazis were coming to power, and her story "The White Horses of Vienna" won the O. Henry Award for Best Short Story of 1935. She returned to America by Pan Am Clipper in 1941 (having managed to usher a brood of six children from the family chalet in Mégève to Lisbon via Marseilles, accompanied by her second husband, Laurence Vail; his ex-wife, Peggy Guggenheim; and Guggenheim's husband-to-be, Max Ernst).

Angered by the talk she heard back on Main Street America accusing the French of having "lain down on the job" following the Fall of France in 1940, Kay Boyle began to pour out stories for the popular magazines in order to convey to the widest possible audience the truth about what was happening in Europe. Her 1944 novel *Avalanche*, originally serialized in the *Saturday Evening Post*, was the first book about the French Resistance (and her only bestseller). In the heyday of McCarthyism, while Kay Boyle was living with her family in Occupied Germany and working as a foreign correspondent for the *New Yorker*, she and her diplomat husband, Joseph Franckenstein (an Austrian baron who fled Nazism, became a U.S. citizen, and was decorated for his heroic work with the OSS behind enemy lines in World War II), were subjected to a loyalty-security hearing. Despite their being cleared, the *New Yorker* withdrew her accreditation and she was blacklisted. The couple returned to America, where Franckenstein taught at a girls' school in Rowayton, Connecticut, and Boyle took various jobs teaching, lecturing, and writing book reviews for the *Nation*. With the help of William Shirer, Edward Murrow, and their lawyer, General Edward Greenbaum, Ret., they fought the State Department for nine years, and Franckenstein was finally reinstated with apologies in 1962. Soon after taking up his post as cultural attaché at the American Embassy in Teheran, he learned that he was dying of cancer. A few months before his death, the couple once more moved back to America, and Kay Boyle accepted a position on the faculty at San Francisco State University, where she taught from 1963 to 1979.

Throughout the Sixties, Seventies, and Eighties, she has devoted her energies to a wide range of social and political causes, speaking out for the rights of racial and ethnic minorities, traveling to Cambodia on a fact-finding mission with a pacifist group in 1966, demonstrating against the war in Vietnam (and twice going to jail for blocking the

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entrance to the Oakland Induction Center), supporting the student strike at San Francisco State in 1968, and marching with Cesar Chavez on behalf of California farm workers. Unwilling even once a year simply to bask in the affection of her many Bay Area friends and admirers, she has turned her birthday party into an annual fund-raising event for Amnesty International. "I believed with Camus," she has said, looking back on her life and work, "that the writer, the artist, does not make the choice to fight against oppression. It is his art itself which does not allow him to remain silent."[2]

As a creative artist, Kay Boyle has had a distinguished and prolific career. Her contemporaries of the Twenties, including William Carlos Williams, Katherine Anne Porter, Archibald MacLeish, and Black Sun Press publishers and poets Harry and Caresse Crosby, quickly identified her as an important talent of their considerably talented literary generation.[3] While her earliest work appeared in the avant-garde "little magazines"—*Poetry, Broom, Contact, This Quarter, transition*—she later went on to write for such large-circulation magazines as the *Saturday Evening Post, Harper's Bazaar,* and the *New Yorker* (for which she was a foreign correspondent from 1946 to 1953). She has written over forty books in nearly every conceivable genre: novels, short stories, short novels, poetry, essays, memoirs, children's literature, two ghostwritten books, and translations of French novelists. (This in addition to having three husbands and raising eight children—six of her own and two stepchildren.) By even the most traditional standards, her credentials are impeccable. She has twice won the O. Henry Award for Best Short Story of the Year (in 1935 and 1941), received two Guggenheim Fellowships, holds a number of honorary degrees, was awarded a Senior Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1981 for her "extraordinary contribution to contemporary American literature over a lifetime of creative work," and is one of only six women among the fifty distinguished members of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, where she occupies the Henry James chair.

Studs Terkel says, "We think of Kay Boyle, immediately, as the golden girl of the Twenties in Paris, and the artists who were there. She knew Joyce, you name them, Duchamp, Beckett, she was there, this girl out of Cincinnati, and she was writing." At the age of eighty-six, Kay Boyle is one of the last people alive who can speak firsthand of Paris in the 1920s, one of the last survivors of the "Lost Generation." While she never met F. Scott Fitzgerald in Paris, she recalls attending a book-signing party for the young celebrity in New York with her sister in 1922. As Kay Boyle tells it now, Fitzgerald would ask each of his

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adoring fans her name and then inscribe her copy, "To my darling 'so-and-so.' "[4] Her second husband, Laurence Vail, who had earned the title "King of Bohemia," was a great friend of Hart Crane, and Kay Boyle remembers wild evenings in Paris cafés when the two men would smash their glasses on the floor and poke their fingers in the soufflés that the waiters were carrying by on trays. (When she and Vail once succeeded in getting Crane out of jail, where he had been for three weeks following a brawl at the Sélect, he was furious, she says, because he had fallen in love with his cellmate.)

She visited Gertrude Stein in her salon at 27 Rue de Fleurus and remembers talking about recipes with Alice B. Toklas while Stein held court in an armchair across the room, ringed by young male admirers sitting on the floor at her knees. Kay was never invited back because, a friend later told her, Stein considered her "as incurably middle class as Ernest Hemingway." Through her sister, Joan, who was working as a designer on Paris *Vogue,* Kay met her sister's coworker, Pauline Pfeiffer, who raved one evening about the talented young writer Ernest Hemingway. Kay was excited when Pauline offered to introduce her to the author of *In Our Time,* a book Kay greatly admired. But after Pauline left, Joan told Kay that Pauline was having an affair with Hemingway while pretending to be his wife's close friend. Finding "the devious designing ways of Hemingway on the make" distasteful, Kay lost interest in meeting him, considering him from then on "a double-dealing bastard."[5]

During the cold, bleak winter of 1925–1926, Kay Boyle, living in near poverty in Harfleur with her French husband, Richard Brault, suffered a prolonged lung ailment that was finally diagnosed by the local doctor as tuberculosis. Then she received a cable from *This Quarter* editor Ernest Walsh, with whom she had been corresponding for some time. Walsh (known to his friends as "Michael") suffered a lung ailment himself as a result of the crash of an Air Force plane he was piloting during a World War I training mission in Texas. He was then sharing a villa in the South of France with coeditor and financial backer of the magazine, Ethel Moorhead. The wire read: "Insist that you see my lung specialist in Paris. I will take care of everything. *La vie est belle.* We want you to join us here. Come quickly."[6] Kay Boyle gratefully accepted the offer, with Richard's blessing, and she recuperated quickly in the sun. But falling in love with Walsh "was a great shock to me," Kay Boyle says, "—a shock I wrote Richard of as soon as it was clear that Michael returned my love."[7] That summer Richard came to visit them in Annot during his two-week vacation from the Michelin tire company,

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and the two men actually came to like each other. When Walsh lapsed into a series of hemorrhages following a round of parties, Richard helped Kay care for him, and one night when they had used all but the last injection of medication to control the bleeding, Richard even drove to Monte Carlo to get more ampoules, returning at five o'clock in the morning. Walsh died on October 16, 1926, in Monte Carlo at the age of thirty-one; his daughter, Sharon, was born to Kay Boyle in March, 1927.

At first Kay Boyle attempted to remain in the South of France with Ethel Moorhead (who bravely had perjured herself by registering Sharon in Nice as Ernest Walsh's legitimate child, claiming that Walsh and Boyle had been married at her family home in Scotland). But friends warned Kay Boyle that Moorhead, who continued to be insanely jealous of her relationship with Walsh, was a danger to the baby. Finally Kay accepted Richard's standing offer to bring Sharon and come to live with him in Stoke-on-Trent, England, where he had been transferred. She stayed a year. Unwilling to "inflict a platonic wife upon Richard for the rest of his existence"[8] and eager to return to France, Kay Boyle, with her daughter, went to Paris in the spring of 1928 at the invitation of poet Archibald Craig. After being employed for two months ghostwriting the memoirs of Craig's cousin, the Dayang Muda of Sarawak, Kay Boyle joined the colony of Raymond Duncan, whose followers wore togas and sandals and ate goat cheese and yogurt. Her experiences in the Duncan commune for several months in 1928 (including her disillusionment with its weak-willed and covertly materialistic leader) formed the basis of her semiautobiographical 1934 novel, *My Next Bride*.

Kay Boyle recalls her first meeting with Samuel Beckett in Paris in 1929. They sat together on a sofa in the apartment of American poet Walter Lowenfels and talked from nine o'clock until one-thirty in the morning. Lucia Joyce, with whom Kay had studied dancing under Elizabeth Duncan (Raymond and Isadora's sister), had just been committed to a sanitarium. Kay maintained that there was no such thing as madness and argued that if Lucia had been loved and understood enough by her family, this never could have happened. But Beckett, who had worked in asylums in Ireland, told her that there is an abyss between sanity and madness, and that once a person had gone over that abyss, not even love could bring that person back. Finally he was able to convince Kay Boyle that there is such a thing as madness. (In 1981, Beckett wrote to her that the thing he would never forgive is that he had wanted to tell her the plot of a Machiavelli play he had seen the

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night before and Kay wanted to talk only about Lucia.) Boyle and Beckett remain fast friends to this day, corresponding regularly. Kay finds it "terrifying" that such a young man as "Sam," who is only eighty-two, should be so obsessed with death. Excerpts from the long "Poem for Samuel Beckett" that she is writing are published in her most recent collection, *This is Not a Letter and Other Poems* (1985).

"No past tense permitted," she warns in this poem. Rather than reminisce about Paris, Kay Boyle is far more eager to talk about a Sunday in July, 1988, when she renewed her long friendship with black activist and preacher Cecil Williams at a rousing service in his Glide Memorial Church in San Francisco and was deeply moved by his continuing work with the homeless and hungry. She would rather speculate on the baffling behavior of her landlord, who throws away his newspaper with the rubber band still on; delight in her recent first meeting with Louise Erdrich, a young writer whose work she greatly admires; or tell of the wonderful male nurse who tended her in cardiac intensive care following an angina attack in May, 1988. When her heart had fluttered at 180 beats a minute, it had felt like a butterfly trapped inside her chest, she had told him. "No, it is actually much more like a hummingbird," the nurse had replied, and, ever the writer, she was thrilled by the precision of the metaphor.

The entry hall of her apartment in Oakland presents a striking tableau of past and present, of woman and artist and activist. On the wall hangs a mosaic of painted ceramic tiles by her daughter Apple. On the table in front of it stands a curlicued figure of buffed plaster that vaguely resembles a tree trunk with three upturned hands for branches—a treasure she bought for fifty cents in a New York flea market with her old friend, Marcel Duchamp. (They speculated that it might have been used as a display prop in a jeweler's window, with necklaces draped over the palms.) And, one afternoon in August, 1988, on the seats of the two straight-backed chairs flanking the table, sat plastic dishpans of the bathwater she saves to water the garden and flush the toilet in a dauntless fight against the California drought.

When Kay Boyle is strapped for money, some of her friends jokingly suggest that she fabricate a bestselling book of memoirs detailing her many love affairs with literary figures in 1920s Paris. (They point out, she says, "that as I am the last survivor of the revolutionary army of the Left Bank I am free to write of anyone and everyone of that time without fear of contradiction."[9]) But she is impatient with the legend of the Lost Generation. "It was a very

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miserable time actually," she has said, a time marked by disappointments, suicides, and near-starvations. "And the people who accomplished everything did not sit around in cafés. Joyce had just one place he went to, only one. And Gertrude Stein didn't sit around at all. I mean she had her soirées at home. So it's all been very much twisted around." Many of the writers associated with the Left Bank actually lived outside Paris and came into the city only occasionally, she points out, and adhering to an unwritten code, they would never have dreamed of discussing their work. It was mainly the exchange rate, she now insists, that brought everyone to France at that time. ("Exchange. Exchange was wonderful. You could live for five dollars a week very well.")[10] And when the financial situation changed, many expatriates moved on in the Thirties to Germany or Austria or wherever the exchange rate was most favorable.

Yet, while Kay Boyle debunks the myth of Paris in the Twenties (and disparages the "vultures" who have perpetuated it), she acknowledges that it was a deeply significant and revolutionary period in American letters. In an essay of the 1970s entitled "Writers in Metaphysical Revolt," she has said of that time:

> Our daily revolt was against literary pretentiousness, against weary, dreary rhetoric, against out-worn literary conventions. We called our protest "the revolution of the word," and there is no doubt that it was high time such a revolution took place. . . . With the magnificent exceptions of Whitman and Mark Twain, our nineteenth-century authors had never for an instant been free of the English tradition. There was *then,* before the Twenties, no lively, wholly American, grandly experimental, and furiously disrespectful school of writing, so we had to invent that school.

"It may be of interest to point out," she continues, "that we expatriates (as we are now called) were no more respected by the establishment in our time than, say Jerry Rubin or Abbie Hoffman were in their day. We are looked on with a curious respect now that we are either all dead or rapidly approaching the grave. But in the Twenties, we were not considered of much enduring value by American critics or American editors or American publishers."[11]

Kay Boyle has remained, in Studs Terkel's words, "perpetually contemporary, and young." Yet while the style and subject of her work have continually changed to reflect the immediate concerns of her times, her fundamental beliefs have remained remarkably constant. Her perennial beliefs have been in the sanctity of the human spirit, in the moral responsibility of the artist, and in the power of the Word.

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From the beginning, she has taken the viewpoint of outsider, deeply critical of the materialism and complacency that infect American culture like "poliomyelitis of the will."[12] When *transition* asked a number of expatriates in 1928 "Why Do Americans Live in Europe?" she spoke as a moral exile, replying in part, "To me there is in America no conviction which questions the value of inventions that protect the flesh from everything except the importance of being cared for."[13] Her early dedication to the Revolution of the Word was hardly an esoteric matter of pure aesthetics; then, as now, she believed that language not only reflects but can shape human experience. In a review of Hart Crane's poetry entitled "Mr. Crane and His Grandmother," she wrote in 1928: "There is no use getting up onto another plane and putting words together in another way, words that insist upon a new way of being heard, unless there is behind these words a power and beauty hot enough to melt away the words on the tongue."[14]

It was the willful distortion and corruption of language, she has asserted (along with George Orwell), that enabled the Nazi state to corrupt human thought, to make a political weapon of the German tongue, a weapon that "degraded the dignity of human speech to the level of baying wolves."[15] In her "Declaration of 1955" she stated directly her belief that the fate of humanity lies in the power and purity of the Word, and therefore, in the hands of the writer. With Thomas Mann, she believes that it was the German intellectuals who allowed a dictator to come to power in Germany: "Had they, through their works and by their vision, made richer promises than those he made, the man called Hitler would have been forced into exile instead of the writers of a country that he brought finally to defeat."[16] And she expressed her grave concern for what was happening in contemporary America:

> I warn the sponsors of television programs . . . that the salesman with glassy eye and voice rising in hysteria, who, his back to the wall, offers foam-rubber pillows free, absolutely free, presages the end. I would ask the lonely protagonists of novels still unwritten to reject communion and refuse identification, recognizing that writers are men and women who have accepted a moral responsibility and who must bear it, each isolated in his own conviction, quite alone.[17]

Yet, almost paradoxically, while believing that the artist must remain apart, she also believes that the writer must be "the spokesman for those who remain inarticulate around him": the writer must be "an aeolian harp whose sensitive strings respond to the whispers of the concerned people of his time."[18] To this day, she continues to express

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the same sense of estrangement from her culture that she first articulated in the 1920s, while maintaining her unwavering faith in the infinite—but tragically unrealized—capacity of the human spirit. Today she writes:

> The writer must never cease being astounded by the mediocrity and complacency of the materialism of the society in which he functions. He must never cease being outraged by the compromises so many around him have made, and which even he himself has made. In every word he writes, he must seek to communicate his awareness of the constant betrayals of honesty and courage, the willful distortions of truth, and perhaps most important of all, man's mistrust of his own kind. For it is these things that have brought our civilization to the brink of disaster and the committed writer knows that this is not for a moment the way the world might have been.[19]

"I find it very convenient to have the same feelings now that I had when I was about eight or nine because I don't have to deny anything I ever wrote and say I didn't mean that," Kay Boyle has said.[20] Her views and her writing have always been so consistent that she quips that she sometimes wonders if she does not suffer from "arrested development."[21] It is this steadfastness of belief underlying the fluid contemporaneity of her materials and methods that makes Kay Boyle the writer so worthy of our critical attention and Kay Boyle the woman so worthy of our admiration.

It is futile to try to do justice in one brief volume to the richness of Kay Boyle's contribution to American life and literature of the twentieth century. Until recently her work has been astonishingly neglected in academe, despite avid and long-standing interest in the expatriates of the Twenties and despite the newer explosion of interest in reconstructing the canon to recognize the work of women writers too long underrated or ignored. Perhaps part of the problem is the diversity of her work. Kay Boyle has written in so many genres, in so many styles, for so many audiences and purposes, for so many years, that her work does not fall into easy categories of academic specialization. Nor has her work always been in harmony with current critical tastes. Her early introspective and experimental novels based on her experience as an expatriate did not interest critics of the 1930s concerned with more "substantial" social issues.[22] Ironically, her more obviously polemical fiction of the World War II and postwar years might better have satisfied the critics of the Thirties than those of the Forties or Fifties. Nor has she cooperated much in promoting her own

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"rediscovery," refusing to tout herself as a spokesperson for the Lost Generation and firmly resisting being called a "feminist." In either role she might easily have attracted a wider following.

It is incomprehensible to me that my own book, *Kay Boyle: Artist and Activist,* was, in 1986, the first full-length study of her life and work to be published. Yet signs of a fresh new interest in Kay Boyle are strong. As recently as the late 1970s, when I began my work on Kay Boyle, simply obtaining copies of her work to read was a time-consuming challenge; in addition to spending hours scouring used book stores and searching catalogs of others in distant cities, I depended heavily on Interlibrary Loan and spent the good part of a summer reading at the Library of Congress. Today her work is becoming increasingly accessible. Since 1980, ten books by Kay Boyle have been published or republished: two collections of short stories; a volume of three short novels; a book of selected essays; a collection of new poetry; a translation of a novel by René Crevel that she had begun in the 1930s; a new edition of her memoirs of the Twenties, *Being Geniuses Together;* and three of her first four novels, which were republished in the Virago Modern Classics series. (A selected bibliography of books by Kay Boyle is included in this volume, prepared in consultation with David V. Koch, Curator of Special Collections at the Morris Library, Southern Illinois University, who is compiling a full-length Boyle bibliography.) Her most recent book is a collection of thirteen stories of the Twenties and Thirties, *Life Being the Best and Other Stories,* published in Spring 1988 by New Directions as a Revived Modern Classic. As a result of a special session on Kay Boyle at the 1987 Modern Language Association Convention in San Francisco, New Directions plans to republish her 1936 novel *Death of a Man* in 1989. A documentary film directed by independent filmmaker Kelley Baker is in progress. And recently she received recognition (and a block of airtime) rarely accorded a writer by network television when NBC's "Today" presented a special feature on Kay Boyle on July 27, 1988, including an interview with her at her home in Oakland. She "blames" the national exposure for the invitation from *Life* magazine to contribute a piece for the cover feature of its December, 1988, issue, in which fifty "great thinkers" answer the question "Why Are We Here?" in 250 words each—an assignment she accepted with both trepidation and amusement. When the issue appeared, however, Kay Boyle's contribution was not included. (She knew when she wrote them that her "words of wisdom" would be controversial and probably not what the *Life* editors were anticipating, but she did find it "shocking" that the magazine had considered

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Richard Nixon and Oliver North to be "great thinkers.") We are pleased that she has consented to the publication of her piece in this volume.

This special issue of *Twentieth Century Literature* presents a portrait of Kay Boyle the woman as well as Kay Boyle the writer. I can think of few other cases in which it is so difficult to separate the writer from the work; in a recent autobiographical essay, she herself dispenses with entire years of her life by referring the reader to particular works of fiction. (For example, in a section of the autobiography subtitled "Chronology 1922–1963," her three-sentence entry for 1926 includes this statement: "My separation from Richard and my life with Ernest Walsh until his death at the age of thirty-one are recounted in my novel *Year Before Last*, published in 1932."[23] The novel itself, however, is prefaced by the conventional disclaimer: "None of the characters herein depicted have any connection with actual people, dead or living.") This volume opens with memoirs and personal reminiscences by many who have known Kay Boyle—as friend, colleague, teacher, mentor, mother, and in all too few instances, as contemporary. Two early and important reviews of her work, "The Somnambulists," by William Carlos Williams, and "Kay Boyle: Example to the Young," by Katherine Anne Porter, are reprinted here with the kind permission of their literary executors, James Laughlin and Isabel Bayley.

I am delighted and grateful that Kay Boyle has consented to the publication of one of her earliest stories, "On the Run" (and to my rummaging through the neatly stacked and labeled trunks in her garage in search of photographs for this volume). "On the Run," first published in *transition* in 1929, was last published in 1930 in *Wedding Day and Other Stories*. The story grew out of Kay Boyle's own brief life with Ernest Walsh in the months before his death, as the couple traveled from one French village to the next in desperate search of a place where they might rest and work in peace—a place that would not turn them away when a hotelkeeper heard his cough. In its exploration of the idiosyncratic personal experience and in its radically innovative style—pushing the limits of language to probe the interior perception, in what the *transition* manifesto called "the hallucination of the word"—it is valuable as an example of Kay Boyle's early dedication to "the Revolution of the Word." (In fact, the story was published in *transition* in the same June, 1929, issue as the manifesto.) "On the Run" is fascinating, too, as a first working out of the material of her second novel, *Year Before Last*, published in 1932.

Finally, the six critical essays published here represent an excitingly diverse range of new approaches to Kay Boyle's work. They deal, too,

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with a wide range of her work, from her early experimental fiction to her later more overtly political stories, novels, and essays (and they are arranged roughly in the chronological order of the work they discuss). The articles in this volume extend the foundations of Boyle scholarship and break new ground. The ground is fertile and there is much work yet to be done. May this be only a beginning.

[1] From an interview of April 26, 1986, in Chicago with Kelley Baker, Square One Productions, Portland, Oregon, filmed as part of a documentary in progress on Kay Boyle, "No Past Tense Permitted," the title of which I have borrowed for this essay. A portion of the interview appears in this issue, courtesy of Kelley Baker. All further references to Studs Terkel in this introduction are from this interview.

[2] "Kay Boyle," in *Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series*, Volume I (Detroit: Gale Research Press, 1984), p. 117.

[3] Two early reviews of Boyle's work by William Carlos Williams and Katherine Anne Porter are republished in this issue. In a letter of 22 April 1929, Archibald MacLeish wrote to Harry Crosby, who had published Boyle's first book, "She has the power and the glory. I believe in her absolutely when she writes—even when I want not to. I talk of her everywhere—not that it can do her any good. Simply that I must." (*Letters of Archibald MacLeish 1907 to 1982*, ed. R. H. Winnick [Boston: Houghton, 1983], p. 229.) And in a letter to his mother, 12 October 1928, Harry Crosby wrote of Kay Boyle, "I think she is the best girl writer since Jane Austen—I say this without exaggeration." (Geoffrey Wolff, *Black Sun: The Brief Transit and Violent Eclipse of Harry Crosby* [New York: Random House, 1976], p. 251.) Crosby sought Boyle's advice on his own poetry and followed her suggestions.

[4] My information for the incidents related in this essay comes from various conversations with Kay Boyle since 1981. Kay Boyle recounts her visit to Gertrude Stein's salon in Kay Boyle and Robert McAlmon, *Being Geniuses Together 1920–1930* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984), p. 296. An account of her first meeting with Samuel Beckett also appears in an interview in *Women Writers of the West Coast: Speaking of Their Lives and Careers*, ed. Marilyn Yalom (Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1983), pp. 105–20.

[5] Unpublished letter, Kay Boyle to Sandra Spanier, 28 September 1988.

[6] Quoted by Kay Boyle in a letter to Evelyn Scott, 2 January 1926. The letter is in The Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

[7] Unpublished letter, Kay Boyle to Sandra Spanier, 28 September 1988.

[8] Unpublished letter, Kay Boyle to Lola Ridge, 29 November 1927. The letter is in the Sophia Smith Collection (Women's History Archive), Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

[9] Unpublished letter, Kay Boyle to Sandra Spanier, 28 September 1988.

[10] From a film interview with Kelley Baker, February 20, 1987, at her home in Oakland, Calif.

[11] Kay Boyle's essay, "Writers in Metaphysical Revolt," has been published

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in *Proceedings of the Conference of College Teachers of English of Texas,* 36 (September 1971), 6–12.

[12] Kay Boyle, "A Declaration for 1955," first published in *The Nation,* 29 January 1955, and included in *Words that Must Somehow Be Said: Selected Essays of Kay Boyle 1927–1984,* ed. Elizabeth Bell (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1985), p. 64.

[13] "Why Do Americans Live in Europe?" *transition,* No. 14 (Fall 1928), 103.

[14] *Words that Must Somehow Be Said,* 32–33.

[15] In *Talks with Authors,* ed. Charles F. Madden (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1968), p. 217.

[16] *Words that Must Somehow Be Said,* pp. 63–64.

[17] *Words that Must Somehow Be Said,* p. 66.

[18] Kay Boyle, "The Vanishing Short Story?," *Story,* 36 (July-August 1963), 115.

[19] Kay Boyle, "Writers in Metaphysical Revolt."

[20] Madden, p. 231.

[21] Unpublished letter, Kay Boyle to Sandra Spanier, 27 July 1981.

[22] Harry T. Moore believed that Kay Boyle's critical reputation suffered from bad timing. In an introduction to a republication of her first novel, *Plagued by the Nightingale* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1966), he explains that the book first appeared in 1931, financially a bad year. And, while her early novels, set in France and centering around a young American protagonist, were "implicitly critical of bourgeois society," they did not belong to the "marching-marching, make-my-bread, in-dubious-battle, hammer-and-anvil school that was establishing itself as the mood of the decade" (p. viii).

[23] *Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series,* p. 115.

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On the Run

Kay Boyle

The little alps were baked dry and the grass on them waved in June like a slow fire along the rails. These little mountains ran in a sharp sea in the windows and the smoke from the engine twisted it in strong white ropes through the car. He opened his mouth to say "Saint-André-les-Alpes" and when he had opened it the smoke came in and filled it with bitterness. As the train stopped a soft pink tide of pigs rose out of the station-yard and ran in under the wheels of the wagon. The crest of little alps was burning across the roofs of the town, with the dry crumbling finger of the church lifted and the sky gaping white and hot upon decay.

He lay down on the bed in the hotel and when the bonne came to the door he sat up quickly and lit a cigaret. He talked to her, smiling, moving his hands, with his eyes insisting that she understand him. He wanted pigs' feet grilled in batter and breadcrumbs. He insisted with his hands moving to convince her of the natural beauty of his hunger. A sick man would not want pigs' feet grilled in batter and breadcrumbs. She answered him shaking her head that they were not this time of year as if they sprang up like seeds in the garden. She nodded sternly, seeing that he was dying. "Later," she said, "later . . ."

Get her out of here he said I am going to cough Christ is this where the death will get me take the cigaret and when I cough walk around the room and sing or something so they won't hear me

The bonne came back to them saying that the washer-woman had so much work to do that she couldn't take in their laundry this summer. "Here's your laundry back," said the bonne, "because the washerwoman

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From: *Wedding Day and Other Stories* (New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith), 1930. First published in *transition*, No. 16–17 (June 1929).

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has so much work." "What?" said he, "What?" The alps were closed like dry fists and the grass burned up to the window. "My God," he said, "we'll clear out of here. Saint-André-les-Alpes what a hole. I'll come back and haunt you. I'll eat your heart out Saint-André I'll curse and rot you."

If there were a nice fine cold now to tighten up whatever it is shaking around in me hop around the room now and sing to keep them from hearing me a tight cold now pulling me together to say to them

The bonne came back to say that the shoemaker had so much work to do now that he couldn't touch their shoes for them. The mountain-trains were screaming like cats at the window. We're awfully near the railway anyway he said. If I laugh too much at he said my girl you don't understand the Irish until the sun kills me I'll be here none of your washwomen or your shoemakers if there were a fine tight cold to pull me together now he said I'd get out of here faster than the pigs hitting the dust get her out of the room he said I'm going to cough.

The bonne came back to say that the proprietor the woman luxuriously in mourning for her entire family bereaved in the fullness of middle-age would speak with Madame. Bereaved in the full sallow of her cheeks bereaved and the tombstones rising politely polished with discreet sorrow bereaved and remembered with bubbles of jet frosted on her bosoms and mourned under waves of hemmed watered crepe. I have mourned people for years and years this is the way it is done.

She stood in the stairpit with her eyes starting out of her you'll have your bread and your butter and your coffee Madame when you've talked to me. "Come in here," she said. "Finish to enter."

The sweet sorrow of the crucifix faced them the rosary hanging like false-teeth on the bed-stead the sacred smile the Christ bled with artistry in the well-rounded arms of the Virgin. "Madame," she said without any hesitation, "your husband cannot die here," she said, "we are not prepared for death."

He sat up on the bed when he heard her coming back down the hall and he said what do you leave me for you've been gone a hundred years is she being rude to you? I called her a bitch he said keep your temper please keep it it worries me when you slam the door

"Saint-André," he said into the pillow, "I'm a sick man. I'm afraid. This time I'm afraid to go on."

You you afraid listen here packing the bags again the hairy-legged brushes pointed ampoules as beautiful as earrings bottles of ergotine and striped pajamas we're going on somewhere else and have pigs' feet grilled and champagne and peaches with flames running on them this

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hole dries the guts in you do you remember Menton last February and every time you read Umbra the cabinay flushed may the Gods speak softly of us in days hereafter and the very small sausages for breakfast at the Ruhl

Saint-André-les Alpes you're a perfectly ordinary piss-pot
With a blue eye painted in the bottom of it
Fit only to be put in a cheap room under the bed
With education refinement and all the delicate bellyaches
Here's to bigger and better pigs' feet

Keep on keep on keep on he said maybe I'm going to bleed

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Why Are We Here?

KAY BOYLE

In August, 1988, Kay Boyle received a letter from Life magazine (addressed to "Ms. Kaye Boyle" on "Yousemite" Avenue in Oakland, California), soliciting a 250-word contribution for the cover story of its December, 1988, issue: "The Meaning of Life: Fifty Wise Men and Women Tell Us Why We Are Here." The letter began:

> *As we approach the 21st century, the editors of LIFE think it time to re-ask that ancient question: Why Are We Here? We are presently contacting a number of the world's great thinkers (including scientists, theologians, philosophers, writers and artists) and inviting them to respond. Our goal is to challenge and inspire LIFE's readers with a remarkable array of answers and possibilities.*

When the issue came out, Kay Boyle found it "shocking" that Life had included Richard Nixon and Oliver North in its constellation of "great thinkers." Her own contribution did not appear. It is published here for the first time.

The heart, the brain, invisible organs within us, are the sole guardians of our lives. Through the millennia, we have developed from our primate ancestors without the supervision of any divine authority. But during the centuries, the brain never ceased rebuking man for his barbarous instincts, while the heart pled with him to curb his ferocity.

To a minimal degree he complied by designating those he looked on as lesser men to take violent action in his name. At first he dressed them in shining armour. Later he outfitted them in what came to be called "uniforms," with medals or colored ribbon on their chests, in which they took great pride. We follow these same customs today.

With the establishment of the Christian Church, known as "The Church of Peace," man was encouraged to kneel down before the altar

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and beseech a presence beyond the limits of our planet to forgive him for his evil ways. By these acts of contrition, he believed he was assured of a hereafter. He did not know that it was too late. He had not understood that the power and the mystery reside within us, for he had not paid heed to the counsel of the compassionate heart or the eager, active brain. Nor had he perceived that our individual lives, whether rewarding or degrading, stand as evidence and confirmation of an ever evolving history that we are here to take part in so that eventually it will bear an honorable name.

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Personal Views

DOROTHY BRYANT

I first saw Kay Boyle in the mid-Sixties, soon after she joined the Creative Writing Department at San Francisco State University. I was standing in the hall outside her office, waiting for a friend who had stopped off to get her signature on his grant application. My friend was accomplished, charming, ambitious, and lazy. He had confided to me that he meant to take a trip on the grant money—afterwards he could submit some old stories as evidence of work done.

As I stood there, wondering if my rising irritation with him were merely a sign of envy, I heard Kay Boyle's voice for the first time—high, light, with a slight tremolo like a bird, a very angry bird. "Get out of my office! I'm sorry I ever wasted any of my time on you!" Standing in the doorway, she looked like a white hawk, with her thin, beak-like nose, her sharp eyes, and her gray-white hair swept back as if she were diving down upon my retreating friend.

As we walked away, he shrugged and mumbled, "a difficult woman." I said nothing, but when we waved good-bye and went our separate ways, I stood a little straighter and moved a bit more confidently. Charm and glibness had proved insufficient, at least in this instance. What counted was the work.

One of my recent meetings with Kay occurred in Spring of 1987. We were at my home, sitting down to eat with Jessica Mitford and Grace Paley after the four of us had done a benefit reading for Amnesty International on Kay's eighty-fifth birthday. As we moved toward the table, Kay suddenly stopped, and I heard my name burst like an accusing cry of pain from her. "Dorothy!" The sharp eyes turned on me. "Grapes?" She stood frozen until the politically offensive fruit was removed from the table. Her look was the same hawk-like stab I had first seen twenty years ago. It pricked my conscience awake, convinced me before I read the farmworkers' literature I received from her in the next day's mail.

Between these two scenes, there have been many others where I have seen Kay Boyle in softer moods: warmly encouraging a young writer; comforting a friend or a stranger in trouble; telling uncensored

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tales of her encounters with Gertrude Stein or Ezra Pound or Katherine Anne Porter; laughing in the midst of a crowd—for Kay loves a good party.

Yet I treasure those two scenes of Kay Boyle being "a difficult woman." Difficult about the demands of art. Difficult about the demands of humanity. Bless Kay Boyle for showing us the unswerving integrity without which neither art nor humanity will survive.

RUBY COHN

Being Ingenious: A Montage for Kay

> *Paris was their responsibility. No one else had the same delight, no one else put foot to pavement in such a way.*
>
> —"Wedding Day"

In the New York ghetto where and when I grew up, Paris was fantasized as a perpetual wedding—replete with song and color in an international party of the arts. The city's geography was hazy in my mind and its history a tabula rasa; I scarcely perceived that Parisians spoke French. Perhaps it was my puberty that cast a glow over the films of Jean Gabin and Sasha Guitry (womanless in my faded memory), so that I scarcely read the shaky subtitles. Perhaps it was my appetite for the fiction of what was only later called The Lost Generation; how could they be lost, putting foot to Paris pavement in such a way? I no longer know who first beckoned me to that aureate city—Barnes, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, perhaps painters, but among them was Kay Boyle. It was certainly Kay Boyle who, during World War II, first published fiction about anti-Nazi resistance in France, keeping hope aflame for a resurrected City of Light.

> *He sat in the sun with the blanket about him, considering, with his hands lying out like emaciated strangers before him, that today the sun would endure a little longer.*
>
> —"Rest Cure"

At the first faculty meeting of 1963 at San Francisco State University, I learned that Kay Boyle had been appointed to teach Creative Writing in the English Department. Having read—years before—some of her fiction, having followed—irregularly and from a distance—her persecution by McCarthy's men, I responded above all to the fact that a famous writer would be in daily proximity. Unfamiliar with her private life, I didn't know that she would begin the school year in bereavement. Kay's husband, Joseph Franckenstein, died in October, 1963, of a brain tumor, after spending the last decade of his life in a

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legal battle against McCarthy allegations about his loyalty to his adopted country, the United States. His self-defense was finally successful, but he did not live to enjoy his success.

Not having read Boyle's work in any intelligent sequence, I drew no analogy between her husband's death and that of the lover in her early stories. Only later did I reflect on how cruelly Kay's life was imitating her fiction, which in turn was seeded by her life. In 1963, with two dependent children, Kay worked at her teaching—a heavy load even for the most experienced among us. She did not allow her heavy emotional load to intrude upon her classes.

Kay says that she and I first met in the Women's Lavatory of the college, and although I have a visual image of that meeting, I think we probably exchanged greetings before that, because I knew who she was when we washed our hands, sharing a mirror—she exceptionally slender in black, with a halo of silver hair and Chanel No. 5 about her pale, pale face. I was struck—as I still am—by her direct gaze and her erect carriage. But shy of either sympathy or admiration, I must have muttered about weather and classes.

From a friend who was a real estate broker, I learned that Kay Boyle was looking for a house in an integrated neighborhood of San Francisco. Nominally, all San Francisco neighborhoods were integrated, so I expressed surprise. My friend, like myself a New York Liberal, shrugged her shoulders and said she wouldn't "handle" a house in the neighborhoods Kay was investigating; it wouldn't be safe to come home at night. What is more, the friend had her doubts as to how serious a client Kay would prove, because she stopped to converse with children instead of concentrating on real estate. Kay was indeed serious, however, and she bought an inexpensive and rundown house discovered by her children, and then handled by another agent. Partitioned for five families, the house was still inhabited by three of them when the Franckensteins moved in, and it was a year before the transplanted family was in full control of their home. The work of extensive and gradual renovation may have helped purge their grief at Joseph Franckenstein's death at age fifty-three.

Poets, minor or major, should arrange to remain slender,
Cling to their skeletons, not batten
On provender, not fatten the lean spirit
In its isolated cell, its solitary chains.

—"Poets"

Although Kay doesn't mention him by name in this poem, Samuel Beckett is the most slender of poets. In 1964 in my course on Modern

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Drama, I taught Samuel Beckett's *Endgame,* a play set in an isolated cell. Informing the class that Beckett had gone on to write *Happy Days* and *Play,* I speculated that perhaps he had concentrated drama to its final precipitate and would retreat to fiction. A young man in the class, one whom I could always count on to read a passage with feeling and intelligence, remarked that Beckett was working on a movie. A movie! I was dubious and asked the young man his source of information. He muttered something about his mother, and, not wishing to embarrass him, I dropped the subject. But when I cornered him alone, I asked where his mother got that outlandish idea. "She just saw him in New York," he informed me. *Saw* the reclusive Samuel Beckett! I must have exuded skepticism because the young man explained almost apologetically: "She's known him a long time. They used to be friends in Paris." And suddenly I realized that my student, Ian Frankenstein (as I believe I spelled it), bore a startling resemblance to Kay Boyle—as well he might, being her son. I had admired his vocalizations all through the semester; I had applauded his Apemantus in a school production of *Timon of Athens;* not once did it cross my mind that Ian Franckenstein is Kay Boyle's son.

A quarter of a century later, I know how deeply Ian is Kay's son—self-effacing and devoted to her every need. And I also know that Samuel Beckett not only worked on a movie *Film* but enjoyed it, chatting affably between takes, so that even the *New Yorker* remarked upon it! At the end of the school year 1964, Kay went to New York, and what could be more natural than to drop in on the movie set where her old friend Sam Beckett was working? They had met in Paris in 1930, and although more intimate attachments of that era did not endure, the friendship of Kay Boyle and Samuel Beckett did and does.

> *The ways of academic procedure, being new to me, are deeply puzzling. I can still see no reason, for instance, for the vast amount of printed matter, largely from department heads, that day after day fills our mailboxes to overflowing. These communications keep us informed of absolutely everything except the truth of how things are.*
>
> —"The Long Walk at San Francisco State"

The truth, in 1968 at San Francisco State, could not be assigned ineluctably to "how things are" because "things" depended very much on the eye of the beholder. To the Black Student Union, how things are condemned them to white standards in a white power structure. To sympathetic white students, how things are were truly described in black rhetoric. To sympathetic (overwhelmingly white) faculty members, Black Student Union grievances seemed well grounded, but unnegoti-

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able demands (not to mention mild violence and impassioned threats of violence) were dictatorial and impractical. To administrators of San Francisco State University (including two well-meaning college presidents), classes must meet as usual, however unusual the expression of black outrage. To Governor Reagan of California, how things are was an orderly college campus menaced by outside agitators, who could be discouraged only by punitive police. In a prose that read much like the department memos deplored by Kay, the summarily appointed college president Hayakawa announced: "After weeks of hearing from angry dissidents and assorted fanatics, we have finally come to the stage where the voice of the quiet and thoughtful majority is being heard, loud and clear." The loudness and clarity was amplified by the clubs, guns, and mace of a special branch of the police, the Tactical Squad. Perhaps because she was puzzled by the ways of academic procedure, Kay Boyle was not puzzled by the unnegotiable demands of the black students. She knew that their stridency was grounded in the ways of an academic procedure that denied them a voice, and to her their very obscenities were declarations of liberation. When a timorous faculty mounted an informational picket line to support the black students in principle, Kay boldly took the lead, whereas I was near the straggling tail. Fearing that the helmeted Tac Squad would charge into the chanting students, Kay marched us down a no man's land between them. Quaking under my sign (whose message has faded from memory), I was puzzled about the inadequacy of academic procedure. Kay never faltered at the head of the line, and I lagged hesitantly behind.

> *On the picket line that stretched from Holloway along Nineteenth Avenue, the American witness from Paris might well have been reassured. One of the greatest experts on the work of Samuel Beckett walked casually there day after day, mile after mile talking of modern German opera, holding high a placard which read: EDUCATION, NOT REGIMENTATION!*
>
> —"The Long Walk at San Francisco State"

I think the American witness from Paris is fictional, but I am the Beckett expert in Kay's generous description (the only Beckett scholar at San Francisco State). And I was far less resolute than her sentence suggests. My ambivalence about the strike is accurately captured by the late Herb Wilner in his contributions to *College Days in Earthquake Country*, but these present paragraphs are dedicated to Kay, whose unswerving purpose suffuses not only *The Long Walk at San Francisco State* but the poem "Testament for my students, 1968–1969."

Positions hardened in the waning days of 1968: black rhetoric was

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increasingly inflammatory, and white forces of order were increasingly intransigent. I was not at all sure of what I was for, but I knew I was against a governor in Cloudmovieland (Reagan) and a college president who issued ukases through a loudspeaker (Hayakawa). After December 3, 1968, I was passionately against the club-swinging Tac Squad that made 453 (mainly student) arrests on a single afternoon—paid by my taxes. When Hayakawa closed the college early for the Christmas break (in a strategy to defuse the faculty strike vote), Kay went abroad. Our colleague and friend Herb Wilner jokingly hoped she would stay there: "She picks an elephant on the Tac Squad and starts to reason with him: 'How can you bear to use force against students?' and I get ready to throw myself in front of her if he lifts his club. Let her enjoy Paris, and let me enjoy good health."

Faculty strike action started soon after the new year 1969. At first there was élan on our part because we felt ourselves a buffer between explosive students and vengeful Tac Squad; we succeeded in preventing bloodshed. As damp, foggy day followed damp, windy day, however, our routine became hypnotic. On strike though we were, most of us were teaching our classes at home or in churches; then we would report for four or six hours of picketing; in the evening we would rush home to see ourselves or colleagues in a 30-second TV spot; we were rarely big news.

It was during those eight weeks of routine that Kay and I formed our friendship. Although I trust Kay's reporting, modern German opera is an unlikely subject for me. We did talk about books—the contrasts between the fiction of Joyce and Beckett, the comparable revolutions of the (English) word in the expatriate Twenties and black lingo of the Sixties, the undervalued contributions of women to American literature—Marianne Moore, Katherine Anne Porter, Muriel Rukeyser, Janet Flanner; we disagreed about Djuna Barnes, but neither of us was an enthusiast of Gertrude Stein. What distinguished Kay from me was that these women were books to me, whereas to Kay they were *people* who had published certain books.

It was during those eight strike weeks that I bought Kay's (and McAlmon's) *Being Geniuses Together,* and when I complimented Kay on her interpolations (far more deep and vivid than McAlmon's original), she chided me for spending so much money in those payless strike days. Nevertheless pleased (I think), she took the volume home to correct the typographical errors—and to compose the first of her cherished inscriptions to me:

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Ruby, I am réellement touchée,
Unaware that you had acheté
Being Geniuses Together. May
I thank you, now as ever? En amitié—Kay

There are any number of unique spots of interest in this vicinity that are, unfortunately, not known to the majority of tourists who flock throughout the year to our beautiful and festive city.

—"Seeing the Sights in San Francisco"

In perhaps her angriest and most incisive piece, Kay indicts the government that sacrifices its young in the Viet War. But in fact Kay was fond of a few "unique spots" in San Francisco—preeminently the tall house of Frederick Street where she lived for nearly two decades. Once the house was renovated, she rented rooms to students who shared a common kitchen, bath, and dining-room on the spacious main floor. There, too, after 1973, Amnesty meetings would be held, or whatever crisis cause necessitated a conference.

Above these spacious rooms, on the top floor, lived Kay and her two cats. The kitchen and bath lay between her living-room and bedroom, all bathed in light of fogless days. From Kay's bedroom (where she preserved an old habit of typing in bed) she could see the hues of gardens—her own and those of her (black) neighbors. In her living-room she liked to serve Dubonnet before a meal; then, arms about one another's waists—we were the same height—she would walk me to the kitchen table. It was always a hot meal, which she prepared without microwave, and without depriving me of a minute of her company. And, since I was a guest in San Francisco after 1969 (when I resigned from State and Hayakawa's presidency), she absolutely and tyrannically refused my help in cleaning up.

When Kay herself was a guest in San Francisco, after she joined her son in Oregon in 1980, her unique spot was the Garchik home on Baker Street—in another large rambling house. Her friends would gather there for a glass of wine and then go out to eat together—usually Harbin's Chinese restaurant. Wherever Kay went, she quietly made her presence felt; this elegant lady who had journeyed in protest to war-ravaged regions—Alcatraz, Cambodia, Nuremberg—*quietly* made her presence felt.

In 1985, again joining her son, Kay moved to an Oakland apartment, across the Bay from San Francisco—in another integrated neighborhood and another bright airy space. (Bright and airy, but not spacious, so that her books remain packed in cartons in the garage!) Too pressed for time to cook for her visitors, she takes them to Bay

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Wolf, a restaurant owned by a former San Francisco State colleague, himself a child refugee from fascism. As Kay was once fondly greeted in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood of San Francisco, so now she is welcomed in the Piedmont section of Oakland, as she walks—more slowly—on her errands.

Do not resort to
An alphabet of gnarled pain, but speak of the lark's wing
Unbroken, still fluent as the tongue.
—"Advice to the Old (including myself)"

Kay recently celebrated her 86th birthday; correction, Kay's 86th birthday was celebrated on Radio Station KPFA by nine hours of readings from her work, a panel conversation among admirers, and a live telephone call to her. The following day there was, as in past years, an Amnesty program in her honor, to collect money for non-violent individuals imprisoned for their beliefs. Only recently free of "gnarled pain," Kay looked radiant, her hair no longer silver but pure white, and clipped quite close, revealing the fine and delicate skull. When she entered the auditorium on her son Ian's arm, there was a flurry of comment on her beauty, for it is rare that the soul's quality is so faithfully externalized.

Kay Boyle has had sieges of gnarled pain throughout her life. She met the father of her first child when, tubercular himself, Ernest Walsh insisted that she leave damp Paris for the South of France. Walsh died, but Kay survived. Back in Paris, in Raymond Duncan's commune, she contracted cerebral meningitis, but was slowly, slowly nursed back to health by her devoted mother. Decades of good health followed, encompassing the birth of five more children.

In the quarter century that I have known Kay Boyle, there has been more gnarled pain. I recall coming to her hospital bed one Christmas morning, wishing to spare her loneliness. Loneliness! Her room was full of flowers, gifts, and visitors; as Kay sat up in bed, smiling benignly at intervals, it was like a queen's *Lever*. (Later she told me that she was so drugged against pain that she remembered none of it.) With Herb Wilner (battling the gnarled pain of his own fatal illness), I tried to direct the flow of traffic in her room.

During Kay's imprisonment for protesting the Viet War at the Oakland Induction Center, she discovered the lump that announced cancer. Too soon after her operation, she rose from her hospital bed to attend Herb Wilner's memorial service—a wraith with fluent tongue—"It's the last thing I can do for Herb."

For years Kay has suffered from arthritis, and at times her spinal

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pain was so acute that she could neither sit nor stand. In 1987, she had to cancel a reading of her work when angina attacks forced her into the hospital. Although apparently under the relief of medication, she feels side effects from that medication. When Kay Boyle appears fluent and gleaming at her Amnesty birthday party, she is the lark who flouts her own gnarled pain. Through the years I have telephoned my concern: "Kay, how ARE you?" And invariably she replies: "How are YOU, dear?"

I wish you triumphs that are yours already,
And also wish to say whatever I have done
Has been in admiration (imitation even)
Of all you marvelously proliferate.

—"For Marianne Moore's Birthday"

On February 19, 1988, Kay's 86th birthday, the words "role model" were often pronounced. I have never heard Kay speak these words, and for all her appreciation of the women in her family, I think she would be impatient with them. So I close this collage, not on her courage and fluency, but on the endearing flaws of Kay Boyle.

Incensed as Kay has always been against injustice, she has made some howling errors in personal verdicts—including praise of some to whom she has dedicated poems (but they are generous misjudgments). Eking out her budget from month to month, Kay nevertheless continues to make gifts and contributions she can ill afford. Although she greets each Beckett work with esteem, she washes over it a rosy glow: how in *Happy Days* could Willie reach for Winnie's hand—Kay's view—when she has no hands? Looking back at her work, Kay prefers her poems to her short stories, and her short stories to the novels that she tends to dismiss as autobiographical: "There's always this searching American woman"; but a new feminist perspective on autobiography fortunately contradicts her own evaluation. Rereading this work or that, only to fulfill some immediate request, Kay Boyle rages that she cannot rewrite it (however we cherish it *as written*). May even her flaws proliferate!

MALCOLM COWLEY

We bickered over the years, often in print. A chief cause of my difference with Kay Boyle was her loyalty to Robert McAlmon, who was no friend of mine and was an unteachably bad writer. Also I questioned Kay's accounts of events in which we had both played a part. I thought she fabulated. But I never once doubted her gifts as a writer or her

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personal courage in difficult times. I salute her at what I hope is by no means the end of a long and brilliant career. We were young together.

HELGA ENSELE

A Friendship across Two Continents

When I was asked to write about Kay Boyle, this was my answer: "I would love to, for this will give me the chance to show how thankful I am for the day that brought her into my life." That was in the autumn of 1949. I had just returned from an "expert-trip" to the United States, and we met in Frankfurt, a city that had been almost totally destroyed by the bombings: Kay, a citizen of the victor nation, a foreign correspondent for the *New Yorker* and wife of a member of the civilian occupying government; I, director of the Frankfurt Women's Prison and a citizen of the defeated country. From our first meeting there developed a friendship that has lasted forty years.

From the beginning we shared the rejection of all that had taken place in this country. I learned that Kay had not wanted to come with her children to live for an undetermined time in Germany with her husband who had been sent there as a press officer. So on arrival in 1948 she had asked the editor of the *Frankfurter Rundschau,* an anti-fascist and a personal friend (who had been imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp during the war), to provide her with a list of people—especially women—who had been unequivocally anti-Nazi. And my name was on that list.

Another bond between us was my knowledge of life in America. I had lived in New York with my husband in 1931–32. He was an assistant professor at Columbia University; I, a student there. After our return to Germany, I earned my university degree, and my husband and I participated in anti-Hitler protest demonstrations on the Heidelberg University campus. Because of these activities, I was excluded from working in my profession (as were my father and my sister from working in theirs); my husband had been denounced by "patriotic" informers at the university and was reduced to working as a science tutor in small, out-of-the-way places. During the war, we ended up in an Austrian mountain village.

After many political discussions, Kay expressed her wish to take a greater part in German everyday life. And so she began teaching a course in writing for the imprisoned women. She continued these classes during the four years she and her family lived in Frankfurt, coming regularly once a week, always absolutely reliable and with great

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concern for the lives of the prisoners. (Many years later I saw her equally involved in her work with students at San Francisco State University.) The women convicts were greatly attached to her. They admired her beauty as well as that of her children, who occasionally accompanied her. The prisoners were proud to be befriended by an American author, and it was only her use of English they felt justified in criticizing every now and then. It was not the same kind of English they had learned from the G.I. boyfriends. "Shouldn't it be 'I says' or 'you all' when you're speaking to more than one person?" they asked. Together with Kay they wrote a play, rehearsed it and some of the prisoners and Kay's children performed it before the entire prison population. Kay had to sacrifice even more than just her time as she had to provide all the necessary stage-props, the prison having absolutely no funds whatsoever.

After Kay had left Frankfurt, when her husband was transferred to Bad Godesberg, we continued to meet again and again—not only in Bad Godesberg and Frankfurt, but also in Paris, in Ireland, and in San Francisco. Our personal attachment to each other and the political involvement we shared and which came to include movements for civil rights, for peace and ecological action, made our friendship an ever closer one. Another focus was her books and my criminological work, but during the first years we concentrated on what was happening in the destroyed country of Germany and what was being done to overcome the catastrophe of militarism.

The title of the book in which Kay deals with the convictions that we shared, *The Smoking Mountain*, accurately describes the situation: The devastating fire had been extinguished, but the mountain went on smouldering for a long time after. In that book, in those stories, Kay was able to free herself from the paralyzing horror of Nazi terrorism and Nazi bureaucracy which minutely documented and filed even its own terrible crimes. The intensity of her reaction is made clear in her detailed reporting of one of the first German trials (following the Nuremberg trials) which took place in Frankfurt, trials conducted entirely by Germans. She was to hear about the man Baab, a sadistic torturer and mass-murderer, who had made the German province of Hesse "kommunistenfrei und judenfrei." At the same time she wrote with cool precision a description of the well-dressed, narrow-minded, dim-witted criminal, a murderer in 56 proven cases, who in the shelter of the bench was rummaging in his pockets for nuts which he then surreptitiously began to munch and who showed no emotion when hearing either the terrible testimony of eye-witnesses of his crimes or

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the remonstrances of the judge—a typical example of this species of human being, composed of a slavish obedience to authorities and a hidden aggressiveness of his own. I think that some of the conclusions which Kay, with characteristic courage, came to about her own country in later years, were not uninfluenced by these German experiences. She knew that under the pressures of dictatorship and war human beings become depraved and therefore they must be preserved from either. Wherever she was, she took the part of the persecuted, whose fate is apparently of no great concern to political and social establishments—as Kay, much to her disgust, already knew at the time of the Frankfurt trial and witnessed at the posh German-American Club.

With clarity and precision she saw many things more in postwar Germany. She saw the loneliness of the occupation forces in a foreign country where they were not welcome (and were sometimes even in danger); she saw with the same concern the defeated who, threadbare and bewildered, aimlessly walked the streets and autobahns of Germany. She let them ride with her in her English station-wagon and she talked with them. Only when she met with those Germans who had profited from Nazism, and who still believed in it, but had already found a cozy place in the new political situation, did she turn away. As a political publicist, she was intensely interested in how the younger generation in a defeated and humiliated country came to terms with the general as well as the personal situation. Were they broken in spirit and cynical, or were they in the political cabarets managing to laugh off the present as well as the past? Always on the side of humanity, she described simple human kindness as well as the blind self-righteousness of those who could not grasp that their fantasies of awesome power had produced crimes that had broken the world asunder. Without mercy, Kay portrayed the miserable attempts to gloss over the past or to defend it in a spirit of defiance when confronted by the victors. But she also observed how the victors dealt with the defeated and it was not without reservations that she stood on the winning side. She was uncorruptible and so could see clearly, and with little sympathy, that the performance of the victors in this destroyed country was not always impressive. Here Kay's solidarity with the defeated and suffering became tangible.

I have read many other books by Kay Boyle, equally fascinated by their contents and their style. But their interpretation must be left to those more competent for it. I could only write down how appropriate was her description of what she saw in this country before her own fate, directed by Joseph McCarthy, called her entire family back to the United States.

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Blurb writers have spoken of Kay as a "stylist." I had occasion to come to this conclusion myself soon after we first met. Kay asked me to act as her interpreter for a short speech she was to make in Heidelberg. I agreed to do so, having just brushed up on my English—which had got rather rusty since 1933, and having interpreted fairly successfully at several conferences that had to do with my field. I visualized a small audience, possibly at the "Amerikahaus," and shortly before the event, Kay gave me her manuscript to read. I got the shock of my life at this evidence of the great variety of her vocabulary, particularly in descriptive adjectives with which, for instance, she portrayed her grandmother, the "horse-woman" from the prairies of Kansas. It was too late to consult a dictionary; and I was even more shocked when I realized that it was going to be a rather large public event, a rare sight at the time. The university campus was full of elegant cars, from which alighted visitors in fine evening dresses. Two other well-known American ladies were also going to speak (one of them the American Ambassadress to Luxembourg whose name I have forgotten). Their interpreters had their translations put down in writing. Kay was the last one to speak, and to my mind the most impressive. I do not know whether the German audience realized how beautifully she spoke. I was glad I could talk at all, my mouth having gone completely dry from shock.

One more remark: I have seldom met a woman who in her language, speaking it or writing it, could express so much humor and wit in describing people and situations. Kay can get herself into the center of absurd comedy which is as much a challenge for her creative powers as it is for her talent as an actress. I think of the two of us sitting in small pubs in Ireland, singing funny or sentimental songs with the Irish locals while on the trail of the Irish women's movement in which Kay takes a passionate interest. Above and beyond our great liking for each other we also felt close to each other in our battle against social injustice and political repression and in our unending concern for the future of the world in the face of civil and military atomic danger.

Everyone who has met Kay has been deeply impressed by the courage with which she bears all the consequences of her numerous involvements, with a will of iron and regardless of her health and the strain on her delicate body. As there can be no better friendship than one that is based on personal love as well as on shared involvement, may this contribution be, with all due modesty, sincere praise of a friendship "across two continents."

(translated from German by Nele Löw-Beer)

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JIM FITZMAURICE

All good thoughts, Kay Boyle

Only once during the course of the semester did Kay Boyle allow us to take to class a "problem" story to discuss—a piece of writing we'd done for ourselves, one that we couldn't get quite right. Generally, however, we took to class writing we'd done specifically for her, a carefully structured assignment. Kay believed that our own writing was continuing outside of class; the purpose of the class was to provide exercises to hone our craft of writing, to stretch creativity, to challenge the established. She gave us constraints in the same way professors of architecture provide constraints on design projects—lot size, terrain, cost. We would have to develop a complete story in three-hundred words, explore the night mind, write an American version of a Noh play. As models she provided us with Williams and Dahlberg and Baldwin, occasionally herself. Once a week we would travel to the Haight (we met in the cold classroom of San Francisco State only for the first class of the semester), to 419 Frederick Street where we would sit on overstuffed sofas or in overstuffed chairs and listen to each other's work—work that always sounded better when Kay read it aloud, for she always, evidently intuitively, picked up a natural cadence. We'd break half way through the evening for wine poured into disposable cups from a gallon jug, and we'd talk in the kitchen or on the steps outside, or we'd browse through Kay's library—a floor-to-ceiling wall running the length of the dining room. At the end of class Kay would return work from previous sessions with comments and suggestions in precise, meticulous detail in the blue ink of her fountain pen.

Was this an innovative approach to teaching creative writing? Probably not. One student objected vocally to the notion of being assigned work. When we had to write a piece three different ways, each time varying the imagery from sight to sound to smell, I recall how indignant she was, writing rebelliously about someone having a bowel movement. (Little did I realize then that Kay Boyle probably knew more about rebellion than did all of us in that room combined—and these were the days of student unrest in 1967–68.) Kay read the graphic depiction aloud to the class with the seriousness and dignity with which she read all our pieces. We all agreed enthusiastically that this paper, though written in spite, was the best of the batch, and Kay, too, seemed delighted with its worth. I do not now remember my fellow student's name or even what she looked like—she may well be winning literary prizes today—but I do remember that she did not return to class.

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What did I learn from Kay Boyle? A lot. But whether it was from her teaching on those Thursday nights in 1967 or from having read her stories and essays or from her outspoken model in the "real" world or from her conversations or her personal correspondence (with their characteristic closing "All good thoughts") I couldn't say. If I had to choose one lesson it would be the commentary about her story "One Sunny Morning," a commentary she graciously wrote for an anthology I edited for ninth-grade literature students. Her words are perhaps more eloquent than the story itself:

> The story came about in the way most of my stories do, out of protest against a social or political injustice. . . .
>
> I hope the basic meanings of the story are clear without requiring clarification. One of these meanings is that children can communicate without prejudice. . . . Another . . . is that the ability to act simply and with courage (as the white boy does when he drives the jalopy into the yard) is a very fine thing. To me, it seems now as brave an act as if he had taken whatever action was necessary, by whatever means were available, to save people trapped in a burning house, or to throw a rope to a drowning person, and thus give those saved that particular salvaged moment of life no matter how many tragic moments might lie ahead. For I feel we must recognize the instant that makes demands on us, whether they be dramatic demands or quiet, unobtrusive ones, such as the one made on the white boy in my story, and to know that in the crucial instant with which we are faced we are obligated to respond.

IAN FRANCKENSTEIN

The Mailbox

My mother, Kay Boyle—Mom to me—and I are alike in lots of ways. For instance, we are both habitual letter writers. In fact, she and I could easily spend our entire existences writing letters. We take breaks from writing these letters only for the necessities that living demands of one: eating, sleeping, and then of course the time required to walk out to mail the letters that took half the morning to write. Then walk back to the house thinking about what was written in those letters. As soon as the front door has closed behind us, we begin to think about the next letters to write.

But Mom takes all of this letter activity a step further than I do: she must have up-to-date information as to the various daily pickup times and in which mailbox this critical information is noted. But sometimes

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that can get confusing, because what is written in bold black ink on those white schedules that are found on the inside of the blue metal chutes doesn't always jibe with the actual time that the mail is picked up. One mailbox in Mom's neighborhood, for instance, gives us 2 p.m. as the time for that particular box on that particular day. Mom happened to be there at 1:30 p.m. Plenty of time, she thought, to mail her letters. But as she dropped them down the blue chute, a white U.S. Post Office jeep pulled briskly up to the curb, and out leapt a postal carrier, canvas mailbag in one hand, a box key in the other.

"It says on that mailbox that mail is picked up at two o'clock this afternoon," Mom said, as she told me about her encounter with the postal carrier that Saturday afternoon on Piedmont Avenue.

"Oh yeah?" responded the carrier, opening the side of the blue metal container that held all those written secrets. She then looked at her wristwatch, then pulled down the blue tongue for confirmation and there it was: SATURDAY 2 P.M. The postal worker shrugged, took out a black pen and changed it to the time that she had arrived—1:30 p.m. And off she flew with her precious cargo like a bee to its next appointed time with yet another blue flower.

So you can see how confusing all this mailing can be. And recently the Post Office changed all of its mail rates. More information to keep track of. And what's more, they have deleted some of their daily pickups too. Mom just spoke with a friend of hers in New York City and her friend informed her that they had changed the times on New York mail boxes as well.

I have always wished that the ultimate birthday present or Christmas gift for Mom would be to give her an entire post office for her use anytime. Included in this gift would be efficient and very friendly little men and women inside, always busy weighing her letters and parcels, and selling her all the stamps she needs. Then she would never have to wait endlessly in a line that extended out through the glass doors and onto the sidewalk outside. That would be a special present.

At Night

When I step into her bedroom late at night
So softly she breathes, so softly I move.
And always like a burning candle there is light
    from a lamp lit by her bed, covered by a scarf
Shrouded by one thousand days and one thousand nights,

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Years from a past that casts, like oil light,
a pale golden glow.

Most nights she lies on her right side, her
sleeping side, knees bent beneath her blanket,
Both hands like a fine porcelain doll held closely
to her chin, suspended as butterflies are when
Captured in glass.
I see her profile against the white pillow,
And I see her head like carved alabaster,
Her chalk-white facial features so carefully etched
as Ancient marble is.

I approach her slowly, quietly, so still she lies.
Watch her breathing body below on the bed, her
Breast barely moving, and suddenly there appears
Youthful beauty and all the vigor of womanhood.
"There," I whisper to the shadows, "there lies a
figure of Time . . . Time once spent prancing gaily,
like a long-legged colt, up Montparnasse always
Radiant to men, to children too. And nights of laughter,
Of song, late night talking, of endless walking,
And of love-making 'til dawn."

"And days? What sort of days?" an unseen presence asks.
"Oh, days . . . days that were full! Full as farmlands at
Harvest time, and then there were days that lay like parched
deserts in their desolation, skulls of anguish, of
Loneliness, and tears," the voice says, "but you did
what had to be done, no task too great, no conversation
too long, and I could work . . . yes, I could work until the
New day dawned."

"And now?" I whisper in the lamp's soft light, but there is only
silence.
I reach out and touch her white hair softly, so softly
And she stirs in her dream-filled state, her lips open
then close slightly as if to speak to me but there is
only that silence now.
I lean over that motionless form and kiss her white
Forehead, my lips touching her tired brow.

HERBERT GOLD

Kay Boyle has become a treasure and a resource, a vital cool-eyed connection to a time which is now seen through veils of romance, and she remains a writer with a special rage, compassion, and her own

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elegance. How she does all that she does—besides being the mother and stepmother of many—is a secret which might make the fortune of the alchemist who could bottle it.

She is that alchemist; she's not telling; but the explanation is available to those who read her work and have been touched by her startling personality.

DORIS GRUMBACH

Kay Boyle: A Tribute

She was an accomplished, indeed famous, woman of letters whose pieces from Europe I had read in the Thirties and Forties in the *New Yorker,* when first I met her. I had been invited to a party at Doubleday in New York to celebrate the publication of her novel, *Underground Woman,* a book I had reviewed in the *New Republic* and liked quite well. The woman to whom I was introduced was slight and still handsome, although her beautiful face, known to me through the Man Ray photograph that appeared on book jackets of earlier novels, had fallen, as Auden's had, into furrows. Her black hair was now gray-white, her eyes falcon-hooded, but her familiar white earrings were there, and the fine smile, and the lovely grace of her kind eyes and voice.

We talked a little, she said: "Come to see me in San Francisco." I said, politely, I would, not sure that I intended to. Beside her on the sofa sat Nelson Algren and Studs Terkel, old friends, there to honor her and give evidence of their long association with each other. I was looking at, without knowing it, one of Kay Boyle's virtues: the gift of firm and faithful friendship, with the less celebrated like Ernest Walsh, Robert McAlmon, and Emanuel Carnevali, to great writers like Samuel Beckett. No one she loved seems ever to have fallen out of her good graces; everyone she loved she goes on loving, serving their literary and personal causes out of her extraordinary largeness of heart.

It happened that I did go to San Francisco with my friend, Sybil Pike. It was somewhere in the mid-Seventies, I believe, and we were thinking about going into the out-of-print and medium-rare book business. San Francisco seemed a good place to begin to build our basement stock of books. We stayed with Kay in Haight-Ashbury, in a wonderful house she had bought, painted and furnished so that it was now a light, airy, elegant place. She took in students who needed a place to live, she put up friends and casual visitors (which we were). She allowed me to tape her responses to queries I needed to ask because I

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was writing a piece on her at the time for, I think the *Chronicle of Higher Education.*

On Sunday, I remember, although she was not feeling well, she took us to the People's Church in downtown San Francisco, and introduced us to a laudably heterogeneous congregation: Blacks, whites, Orientals, hippies, homosexual couples, all worshipping together and supporting a gospel of social consciousness and human rights that was heartening to witness. Afterwards we took her to lunch. She ate very little, but spoke eloquently about the work of Amnesty International, and the outreach work of the church we had just attended. I was struck, as I always am when I am with her or hear from her, with her selflessness. The pronoun "I" rarely appears in her conversation. Instead she tells you about the lives and work of her friends and acquaintances, about the book she has just read and been impressed with, about the goodness of her children and her beloved late husband treated so unfairly when he came to this country.

During the late Seventies I served on the English faculty of American University in Washington, D.C. Kay was invited to give a week-long workshop in fiction for the newly formed Master's program in writing. The first few days went very well. An aging writer, whose name was probably only vaguely familiar to most of the students, she showed younger would-be writers the skill and sensitivity of her approach to her craft and to their efforts. She was kind, gentle, yet firm and sure-handed in her treatment of their work. At first they listened quietly; at the end of the sessions they were her loyal and convinced advocates.

A few days before the end of the week she became ill. Instead of retiring to treatment and seclusion, she invited to the dormitory the students she had not yet had a chance to work with. From her bed she discussed with them their stories. It was a gallant and selfless act, another illustration of how she always put herself last in any list of what was important to her, a demonstration of her absolute commitment to her obligations to others.

At the end of the week she came to stay with us a few days to recover her strength. She was reluctant to be waited on, she made no demands, she maintained her sunny, equable disposition although we knew she was in pain from what turned out to be, I think, diverticulitis. Her trip home, three thousand miles, was made without further comment to us, except a thank you letter in her customary graceful prose.

In the years since, we have corresponded regularly. We do not

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meet. Sometimes she writes of a new physical affliction, but not often. I never remember her complaining, and yet I knew that her health gave her trouble because it kept her from writing, and from the activist work on behalf of peace and human rights which was so important to her. Once I wrote the introductions to two of her early novels for an English paperback series. I sent her the galleys which came back to me with no comment about the praise I had given her books but with meticulous corrections of fact. I was, and still am, amazed at the acuity of her memory. Age may hold her body down, but her memory, like her spirit, is whole.

I have met people who have studied with Kay and have told me about the quality of her teaching. I have encountered readers who tell me how much they liked *Monday Night, Plagued by the Nightingale* or *Year Before Last.* Now and then she writes to tell me about a book she has just read that I ought to pay attention to. Invariably I do, having seen in it all the things that are important to her, a humane approach to life and a deep concern for humanity.

I never think of Kay Boyle's age, cannot even remember now just how old she is. It does not matter. A truly good human being, which she is, is ageless and timeless. When I think of old or aging people like her, I think of a question posed by the immortal baseball pitcher, Satchel Paige: "How old would you be if you didn't know how old you was?" That's exactly, to the day, how old she is.

ALAN M. F. GUNN

"Redeem the time!" How few there are today in the realms of art, of letters, of public life, who have sought to redeem our times! Yet it is now our fortune to be able in this volume, this issue of *Twentieth Century Literature,* to pay honor, to offer homage, to one great lady—to our own Kay Boyle who has redeemed our times by her indomitable spirit, her entire integrity, her ever courageous and luminous utterances.

Such an epiphany has been experienced by so many of Kay Boyle's readers, by her students and other listeners—as by the present writer one evening at a professional assembly in San Antonio, Texas.

The occasion, the subject, of this journal's present appearance, calls, I am well aware, for academic, for thorough and exacting analyses of the utterances of Kay Boyle, whether composed by her in sober or impassioned prose, or, more often, in the lucid and glowing rhymes of her verse and tales. Such analyses I must leave to others. Yet I can testify to what a true mirror of our times these are—most honest, most

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complete, yet ever one that at the same time reveals, redeems, our anguished, our guilty, our still sometimes heroic and compassionate humanity!

JAMES LAUGHLIN

Kay Boyle was one of the great beauties and figures in expatriate literary Paris in the Twenties and Thirties. The notation in my copy of her novel *Year Before Last* shows that I read it at Choate in 1932. (And "purchased from the *Atlantic Fund*" means that I bought it from the prize money of the *Atlantic Monthly* contest for stories by schoolboys.) Dudley Fitts would have told me how good she was.

I think I have all her novels, and they are all exceptional. A superb style that creates its own world of sensibility and color. But robust in a feminine way. No sentimentality, simply a keen perception of what makes people do as they do and feel what they feel. New Directions reprinted *Monday Night* in our New Classics Series (it is a classic) in 1947 and did a collection of *Thirty Stories* in 1957. *Life Being the Best and Other Stories* was published in our Revived Modern Classics Series in 1988, and a republication of her 1936 novel *Death of a Man* is planned for 1989.

As often happens when a writer is famous for one genre, few people know that Kay is a remarkable poet. One of New Directions' earliest books was her *A Glad Day* in 1938. She wrote long lines that build without much pause into stanzas, often with interpolations of prose; subdued imagery but rich in verbal texture, mentation, and allusion.

In the mid-Thirties Kay became interested in the short-short story—stories which could be printed on one page. She conceived of a collection of *365 Days*, a story for each day of the year. She wrote many herself then recruited friends to do the others. I was pleased when she accepted two of mine, one of them a reduction of a rather scabrous piece I had done for the *Advocate*, for the book which appeared in 1936. She sent me three of these shorts for *New Directions 1936*, one of which is reprinted in the 50th Anniversary issue, *New Directions 50*.

Memories of a week when I was skiing in Mégève in France. Kay and her then husband, the writer Laurence Vail, invited me often for meals at their beautiful chalet. It was called "Les Cinq Enfants"—there was a covey of bright and handsome children with names like Sindbad, Apple, and Pegeen, some his, some hers. A happy household.

Kay wouldn't want me to tell this story—she is a proud and private

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person—but I will. She was always on the right side of every cause. During the Vietnam War, after she had moved to San Francisco, she picketed the embarkation docks in Oakland where the GIs were shipped off to that glorious conflict. She was arrested, put in prison and, despite her age, set to scrubbing floors on her hands and knees. She was released only when she was found to be seriously ill and sent to the hospital for an operation.

A version of this tribute to Kay Boyle was published as an introduction to her short short story, "January the Twenty-Fourth, New York," in the 50th anniversary anthology, *New Directions in Prose and Poetry 50* (New York: New Directions Publishing Corp., 1986).

Leo E. Litwak

Kay Boyle at San Francisco State

Kay Boyle became a Professor of English at San Francisco State when she was in her sixties. It was her first tenured position. She was not an academic person and never disguised her misgivings about Creative Writing programs. She, in fact, advised young writers to go out in the world and find a discipline that would nurture a vision larger than their own careers. She spoke of Camus as the relevant model. According to Camus, she said, the writer is meant to speak for those who can't speak, "for the inarticulate, the miner in the mine, the prisoner in the concentration camp and the prisoner in prison. It's the writer's obligation to speak for them, because they cannot speak for themselves."

And yet there was a sense in which she found her place when she came to the campus. It was the country of the young and they were her constituency, At San Francisco State in the Sixties she was situated near the center of turbulence. She demonstrated in behalf of civil rights, against nuclear arms, for Soviet Jewry, against the Shah. She waved placards, sang revolutionary songs, entertained Black Panthers and other militants. She was at center stage during the student faculty strike that closed the San Francisco State campus in 1969. An elegant lady of patrician appearance and a regal voice, she walked the picket line, rallied the troops, led the pickets to intervene between police and students, was so much a thorn in the flesh of established authority that at one point President Hayakawa shouted, "Kay Boyle! You're fired!" Since he had no power to summarily dismiss a faculty member he was, no doubt, simply venting his frustration.

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Political concerns were at the center of her writing. Her passionate views were carried in the *Nation,* the *New Republic* and the *Progressive.* She published a book on the San Francisco State strike. She wrote a novel about her Santa Rita imprisonment. She dedicated a book of poems to her rebelling students. She founded a chapter of Amnesty International. Her birthday became an annual fund-raising event for Amnesty.

It puzzled her that writers could run out of material when the world provided injustice enough to keep anyone writing around the clock. She managed to write under conditions that would have stifled writers with a lesser commitment. She wrote while pursued by Nazis. She wasn't stopped by the harassment of blacklists and congressional committee hearings. Even the illness and death of loved ones couldn't disrupt her sense of vocation.

During the 1920s in Paris, she was closely associated with Maria and Eugene Jolas, who edited the *avant-garde* magazine *transition,* and who, with Robert McAlmon, editor of the Contact Publishing Company, published the early work of Joyce and other expatriates.

"We wanted," she wrote, "a grandly experimental, furiously disrespectful school of writing in America." The idols of the movement were James Joyce, Sherwood Anderson, Gertrude Stein. William Carlos Williams was "one of our leaders, one of our saints." She subscribed to a manifesto that announced the Revolution of the Word, "a revolt against literary pretentiousness, against weary, dreary rhetoric, against all the outworn literary and academic conventions." The enemies were Henry James and Edith Wharton and the "sterility of the 'Waste Land.'"

The Revolution of the Word could not be construed in a narrow political sense. Stein and Joyce hardly wrote for the "inarticulate." Their audience was rarely the miner or the prisoner. Despite William Carlos Williams' campaign for a vernacular language, "Patterson" does not provide a "voice for those who could not speak for themselves." Some of our most arcane literature was produced by the Revolution of the Word.

Yet even a purely literary rebellion has political implications when it rejects established interest and denies outworn conventions. Kay Boyle expected poets to be lean and dissatisfied in a hungry world.

> Poets, minor or major, should arrange to remain slender,
> Cling to their skeletons, not batten
> On provender, not fatten the lean spirit
> In its isolated cell, its solitary chains.

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> The taut paunch ballooning in its network of veins
> Explodes from the cumberbund. The hardening artery of neck
> Cannot be masked by turtle-throated cashmere or foulard of
> mottled silk.

She favored the rebel and stood with the dispossessed and so with the young who are most likely to be unestablished, not yet snared by outworn convention, interests still unvested, still capable of a sometimes ferocious compassion, and at San Francisco State Kay Boyle found her minions.

KENNETH D. MCCORMICK

Kay Boyle has been part of my life since I began reading her in college. It never occurred to me during my hitchhike from Oregon to New York in the summer of 1928, following graduation, that I would ever know her personally, or of course, ultimately publish her.

Years later when she asked if Doubleday would be her publisher I was elated. She had had a disagreement with her former publisher, Alfred Knopf, over something trivial to him and vital to her, and the change was our gain. Her publishing history had an ignominious beginning: her first novel was written years earlier and sent from Paris to an American publisher—and was lost forever. Kay had never received an acknowledgment or receipt of the manuscript and when she asked that it be returned to her she received no reply. An only copy of the manuscript too. What a tragedy.

My own ambitions to be a published novelist had been disappointing but by the time I met Kay I was at peace with myself as far as personal creative energy was concerned—at least for writing. My route towards editing was circuitous, but it eventually led to knowing Kay Boyle very well, and *her* strength was indeed overwhelmingly creative, brilliant writing.

Kay had an idea for a book which at first seemed treacherous. It was to work with Robert McAlmon's memoirs, published in 1938, revising it, writing alternating chapters to it, enlarging the story of Paris in the Twenties as they both knew it. *Being Geniuses Together* was published to wonderful reviews which acknowledged the McAlmon chapters but loudly applauded Kay Boyle's miraculous half of the book.

We also published a grand collection of short stories called *Nothing Ever Breaks Except the Heart,* again to high critical acclaim. Much later an internal company matter separated Kay and me as author and editor, but our personal friendship was strong then and became even more so.

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Kay is a devoted, sensitive mother and grandmother—and there have been joys and tears as her large family has grown on both sides of the Atlantic. I have shared the pleasures when her children have been happy, anguished with her fright when one child married into a strange cult and tried to ride roughshod over Kay herself (but didn't succeed), and worried with her about the children of that commune—some of them her own grandchildren. Her resilience is extraordinary, in emotionally hard times, and in physical difficulties. She is indefatigable and undefeated.

Her interests are now, as they have always been, awake and alive. Her love of teaching has made this country—and beyond—a wonderful place, filled with students and former fellow faculty members who revere Kay as the great person she is. When my own youngest child was born on her birthday, February 19, he received a telegram from Kay herself proclaiming herself his literary Godmother—lucky young man.

She is a woman who knows *who* she is, *where* she wants to be, *what* she stands for politically and otherwise, and *which* causes are worth the fight. Kay is a grand friend, a mentor for many, an intelligent woman, a great lady.

HENRY MCGUCKIN

I met Kay on the speaker's platform at a smallish anti-war rally on the San Francisco State Campus in the mid-Sixties, before the major escalations of the Vietnam war and homefront protests. I was an assistant professor in those days, the campus debate coach, and I didn't know who Kay Boyle was. I remember noting the elegance of her slender form as she stood, ramrod straight, at the microphone, her smartly tailored suit in marked contrast to the casual-to-grubby Sixties attire of the rest of us. I remember the stern conviction in her voice. I don't recall now what she said, but I remember being moved, and I remember turning to the person beside me to ask, "Who *is* that?"

I learned whatever I know of the answer to that question together with my wife, Jackie. We met Kay with increasing frequency as dissent in the Sixties gained momentum and engaged us in similar causes.

The strike at San Francisco State (1968–69) brought us together regularly at meetings or walking the line. Twice we were part of a small contingent of professors called to rescue a squad of frightened, armed and dangerous police who somehow managed to become trapped in a corner of the campus by a large crowd of angry students. Spurred by student cries for their professors to "Do something!" we would rush

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across campus, signs aloft, to the confrontation where we began a little circular march between red-faced, shouting students and pale, silent police until the tension broke and the police made their escape. On our second "rescue," I remember observing to a colleague, "You know, don't you, one of these days we're going to get killed doing this?" He replied, "Yeah, but look at Kay!" And there she was, slender, erect, elegant as always, chin high, eyes blazing as she marched, her shoulders brushing the blue tunics of the rigid police. She made all of us "young Turks" braver than we might have been. And the example of Kay Boyle unquestionably helped to mobilize the courage and convictions of some hundreds of our colleagues who eventually joined us on the picket line.

As the Sixties merged into the Seventies, and the demonstrations grew in number and size, we often walked together, Kay, Jackie and I, our children, against the war, against racism, for jobs and justice, along searing macadam in the San Joaquin Valley for Cesar Chavez and the United Farmworkers.

Sometimes Kay shared lunch with us as we sat on the grass at rallies on the City Hall mall or in Golden Gate Park. We had time to talk. I remember our pleasure in the discovery during a San Francisco demonstration that she loved Danny Kaye. After the march, she insisted that we come up to her apartment where we sipped Dubonnet while she played her old 78 RPM Danny Kaye records, singing along about "Copenhagen" and "Hans Christian Anderson" with girlish delight.

During that first decade of our friendship, Kay and her son Ian began to join us on occasion at the family table. Jackie is French; so is our table—we stay long at it, ten or twelve at a time, with much food and wine, loud political argument, and always, after dessert, we sing. Kay's favorite is an old French folk song, "Aux Marches du Palais," which she sings with Jackie in excellent French. When we've about exhausted the French repertoire, she demands of me, always, "The Internationale!" She finds my baritone voice, more robust than refined, appropriate to the lyrics, I suppose. I usually make some small protest regarding the irony of the first line, "Arise, ye prisoners of starvation," sung over champagne at a groaning table. But she insists that I *must* sing it, and I inevitably do. She always joins in, nodding approvingly, at the last chorus, "Tis the final conflict. . . ."

Kay doesn't talk much about literature, not at all about her own. For a few semesters we taught a course together at San Francisco State, "Rebels and Reactionaries in 20th Century Literature." We were joined by a political scientist, Ted Keller, and we managed to bend the university's bureaucratic strictures enough to permit the three of us to

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teach the class as a team. Our rationale was to explore the dialectical, rhetorical, and poetic elements of literature possessing significant political dimensions such as *The Possessed, Man's Fate,* and Kay's own *Three Short Novels.*

We would sit together at a small table in front of some hundred or so students and argue among ourselves and with the class. Kay was loquacious enough with dialectical and rhetorical insights into a work's political "logic" and "attitude," but she never talked about the purely literary, the poetic, at all. This left that turf to Ted and me. I remember our speculating on submerged lesbian themes in her short novel, *The Bridegroom's Body,* while she shook her head in bemused disbelief. Later she would claim, "They never let me get a word in!" But, actually, she could not be drawn into any discussions of her own work, whatever the provocation. She talked not of writing, but of writers, of the necessity to transcend self, to commit, to recognize injustice and speak out against it for those who have no voice.

I think Jackie has come to know Kay better than I. She knows her in every way I do and in some that I do not. They chat easily about everyday things, work, health, minor gossip. Separated in age by over thirty years, they share their continuing mothers' worries about their children. They find some woman's bond of sisterhood across a generation.

For me, all the qualities of the Kay I know—her profound commitments to her six children, to her teaching, to her work—are of a piece with her pervasive and personal assumption of social responsibility. Lacking all patience with any celebration of self, she has even turned her birthday parties to the practical political purpose of raising funds and support for Amnesty International. At her 85th birthday party, in a packed auditorium at San Francisco State, my introduction of her summed, as well as I am able, the Kay I know and why I love her:

> Kay has lived her politics all her life, and her politics live in her work. She worked and wrote against the Nazis, against the vulgar betrayals and blacklisting of the McCarthy era. She worked and wrote for civil rights, for the farm workers, for the American Indian Movement. She took the long walk at San Francisco State. . . . She was jailed for Vietnam war resistance, she works with Amnesty. She has fought all the good fights of our times for peace, justice, and human rights. For those who know her, then, Kay somehow transcends her work. She becomes for us an example of the good life, lived not simply long, but well, and built day by day, everyday, of commitment and determination, of courage, integrity, and grace.

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JESSICA MITFORD

Thinking back to fifty-plus years ago, when I was a girl, what was I reading? All the Moderns, so startlingly and brilliantly innovative, so different from the well-thumbed (and much loved) classics of childhood such as Dickens, Jane Austen, the Brontës. There were of course the writers of intervening eras, Katherine Mansfield, the Bloomsbury set; but by the time I was growing up in the 1930s, even those seemed a bit dated compared with the dazzling shock of the newcomers: Hemingway, James Joyce, Kay Boyle. These were my literary heroes. Of course I never dreamed that I should ever meet any of them in the flesh.

So it was to my great delight when Kay Boyle showed up in San Francisco. At first, we met glancingly at parties or meetings, but actually it was my husband Bob Treuhaft who first got to know her well, as a client of his law firm when she was arrested along with scores of others for protesting the Vietnam war.

"What's she like?" I asked eagerly.

"Well—she's marvelous," said Bob. "Incredibly brave and incredibly difficult."

She's marvelous, he explained, because she believed so passionately in the cause for which she was imprisoned. She's incredibly difficult because although he had turned hand-springs to arrange for her to be released on bail, or on her own recognizance, and had spent hours in earnest negotiations with prosecutors, judges, etc., when he rushed to the jail to announce the successful outcome of these efforts–she refused to budge, unless all the other prisoners were released.

Over the years, I've come to love Kay very dearly for her newly published writings of which I am a devoted fan, her fascinating and amusing company, and her unending whole-hearted embrace of causes about which she feels strongly.

But—*caveat Kay telephonor,* if that's the correct Latin for "watch out when Kay rings up," which I doubt; Latin scholars, please correct.

Nothing gives me more pleasure than hearing her voice on the phone, although all too often her call presages a few tasks ranging from routine and easy to arduous and possibly life-threatening.

In the former case, it's signing a petition or sending money for a good cause.

In the latter—one amongst many comes to mind. During the reign of the late and unlamented Shah of Iran, Kay rang to ask me to speak at a mass meeting in San Jose along with her, Daniel Ellsberg, and an Iranian refugee poet.

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I wasn't particularly keen, not being an expert on Iranian politics (what could I contribute? I wondered) but Kay was as always enormously persuasive, so I went along for the ride. We were met in San Jose—not by the sponsors of the meeting, but by squad cars of police, who whisked us off to a motel room and explained that a reliable informant had told them that assassins would be on hand at the meeting to shoot the Iranian poet. The poet looked very glum at this news.

I said, "But what if the assassin misses and shoots Kay Boyle by mistake?" And I proposed that the poet should leave pronto and not appear on the platform; he seemed immensely relieved at this suggestion and fell in with it at once. The meeting was a bit of a shambles, Iranian students of two opposing anti-Shah factions shouting imprecations at each other and at us: but that's life with Kay Boyle. It's a bit like living in one of her stories.

As Bob said all those years ago, "She's marvelous, incredibly brave and incredibly difficult." All my favorite characteristics, rolled into one.

KATE MOSES

Kay Boyle now lives on a quiet street off Piedmont Avenue in Oakland in a lovely restored Victorian house. She is already on friendly terms with many of her neighbors and is invited to their Christmas parties, as well as being a finder of stray cats, a regular at the Piedmont Grocery and beloved "writer in residence" at the famous Bay Wolf restaurant. She returned to the Bay Area in Spring, 1985, after living in Cottage Grove, Oregon, for several years with her son, and youngest child, Ian Franckenstein. When she got to California, it was discovered that she had fractured a vertebrae in her back before the move. She spent most of the summer and fall in such discomfort that she greeted her visitors from a couchbed in her living room. That is how I met her for the first time: curled up with her two geriatric cats, Dopey and Tazi, Kay offered me a Dubonnet when I stopped by to drop off copies of her book, *Words That Must Somehow Be Said*. I stayed for three hours.

"Have you ever had the experience," Kay asked me that day, "of upon meeting someone for the very first time, you know that you will remember that time, the sounds you heard and the color of their eyes, for the rest of your life?" Kay was speaking of the first time she met her dear friend, Samuel Beckett. I nodded my head yes, I knew what she meant—it was happening to me in her living room (feeling badly as she was, she still wore a pair of graceful white earrings—sort of her trademark—and asked me a million questions about my family and my

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childhood and whether I liked animals). This was a person who, over the course of 83 years, had raised her own six children and two of her second husband's, had written over forty books, had been blacklisted in the McCarthy witchhunts, had spoken out against virtually every social injustice that passed during her lifetime, who had been arrested during the antiwar protests in the 1960s, who in her writing seeks to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. If true sincerity is marked by action, Kay is one of the most profoundly sincere beings alive. She is, in the words of her friend Hank McGuckin, a person of courage, integrity and grace.

It is hard to imagine, from seeing this delicate-boned, blue eyed, smiling little person that such great strength lies within her. She is a lover of children and animals, a person of great caring and gentleness. When my pet cockatiel caught pneumonia three years ago, Kay loaned me a space heater to put by the cage; she still won't let me return it, saying she'll worry I won't keep myself warm enough.

On Christmas two years ago, Kay's basement had a small electrical fire; I stayed with her for several days until she felt safe again. Knowing that I had to get up early in the morning for work, Kay tiptoed around the kitchen at six to make me hot cocoa and set out Christmas cookies. And at her son Ian's 44th birthday party, Kay set the table with "Happy Birthday" napkins she had secreted to my house in her purse.

Yet her commitment to her humane and ethical beliefs knows no bounds. She continues to speak against Ezra Pound, whose work she feels is meaningless in light of his inhumanity and anti-Semitism. Kay rails against the Reagan Administration's foreign policy, against the veal industry's cruelty to animals, against the unsolved homicide of a transient neighbor on Piedmont Avenue. Kay lets no injustice pass unchallenged.

Her fiction and poetry are just as committed to action as are her essays and personal life. Her use of imagery goes far beyond a desire to set a scene: she wants to set our moral sense into action. A writer so committed in life could be nothing but in her fictional work. The number of her works being reprinted testifies to the value readers place on turning away from meaningless cataloguing of material things and inconsequential actions and the desire to read fiction that transcends the trivial and the unemotional.

Kay asks so much of herself that it would be unthinkable for her not to ask a great deal of others. She does not demand that the rest of us live up to her example, but her courage and her moral energy are so

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great that one finds oneself growing larger and larger with the desire to be right and good. Kay is a provocatrice of integrity.

This "Personal Portrait" originally appeared in the February, 1988, *Folio*, the program guide for KPFA radio, Berkeley, which on February 19, 1988, devoted nine hours of programming to a celebration of Kay Boyle's 86th birthday.

HOWARD NEMEROV

Dear Kay, reading again in your lovely stories, now you are a Revived Modern Classic, I am reminded, not that I'd ever forgotten, what a great bit of luck I had in first coming across your books when I was eighteen and starting out hopeful of being one day a writer. Not in the least knowing that we would ever meet and become fast friends. It was your work first showed me how to write prose sentences, and the sort of terse, elegant decisiveness to aim for in them. From you in prose, from Donne in verse, I learned first and learned most, and I hope I learned well.

RON PADGETT

The First Time I Saw Kay Boyle

It was the summer of 1964. Kenneth Koch was going to be teaching a poetry workshop at the New York City Writers' Conference, at Wagner College, and he had gotten scholarships for Ted Berrigan and me.

Six years before, when I was sixteen, I had read Malcolm Cowley's *Exile's Return*, and it had inspired me to imagine an Expatriates Pantheon, located in the magical city of Paris, with Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, and Kay Boyle—great stylists and monumental figures. And I had just been bowled over by *Thirty Stories*. Ah, the legendary Twenties. Those were the days! So when Kenneth said that Kay Boyle was going to be teaching at the Conference, I was taken aback, caught in a time warp, intimidated, delighted. "You'll like Kay," he added. "She's very flirtatious and marvelous." Yikes: *the* Kay Boyle was going to be reading *my* work, and here we were already into first-name-basis territory!

The first time I saw her, she was introducing a reading by another of the teachers. She stood at the front, off to the left, surprisingly tall, regal even, her head held high and topped with a pale blue aureole, and she said, with perfect high seriousness and great, heart-stopping

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graciousness, and with a warbling mid-Atlantic accent, "It gives me great *pleasure* to introduce today's reader." She pronounced it "pleazhuh."

I shot a glance at Ted, who was shooting a glance at me. Our eyes got round, as if to say *Wow-eee,* and we heard not another word of the reading. We just sat there, numb with awe. Afterward we went outside and staggered expansively back to our dorm room, shouting in falsetto, "It gives me great *pleasure!* It gives me great *pleasure!*"

But of course it was she who gave us—and continues to give us—pleasure. Great pleasure.

MORRIS RENEK

Kay Boyle's Victory over the Frozen Sea

> If the book we are reading doesn't shake us awake like a blow to the skull, why bother reading it in the first place? So that it can make us happy? Good God, we'd be just as happy if we had no books at all; books that make us happy we could, in a pinch, also write ourselves. What we need are books that hit us like a most painful misfortune . . . as though we had been banished to the woods, far from any human presence . . . A book must be the ax for the frozen sea within us . . .
>
> —Kafka, letter of January 27, 1904

People insanely murdering the innocent to prove their higher civilization, while their institutions remain wholesome forces of approval, enlarge the arena of respectability. When mass murder becomes an industry of purity and superiority leading to honors and promotions, not to say satisfying greed, we are in a society where nothing evil goes wrong.

Certainly, if an individual acted out his nightmares in his daytime activities he'd stand out as homicidal, insane. But a society acting out its nightmares feels sane, protectively sane, only better, with purpose, ideals, fulfillment.

How are nightmare people formed? If only we can return the murderous, hateful nightmare hordes back into their crucible again. If only we could be back in *their* present. Watch them as their DNA forms. How intensely alert we'd become. How rich our watch. The human twisting out of shape into a monster before our eyes. Then hear him cheer his own bestiality.

Indispensable Kay Boyle. She was there. She saw it happen. She wrote it down.

How superior the Kay Boyle portraits to the visual records. In too

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many instances of visual records the famous faces are faceless. They appear starched before railroad cars after signing away the last shred of their nation's honor. They harangue the masses. They glow with accepted wisdom, blind to the expensive, inept military establishment. Seldom is there a visual hint of how they were formed. There is no breath on the glass.

Here, early in Kay Boyle's writing, her fearlessly clear eyes bring out the heroine of *My Next Bride* roots and all in a rich and concentrated focus. "It was a voice speaking out of a bodily, a national ease that had never been betrayed."

This restlessly alert style comes out elegantly, unblotted. It may well be a Kay Boyle narrative reads faster than is good for the reader. She is to be savored for the warming reach of her writing. No one should miss Kay Boyle's meeting with Emanuel Carnevali "in that ghastly, filthy room which is his life" where she's given the dying poet a lasting life through her writing *(Words that Must Somehow Be Said)*.

Kay Boyle writes without metaphysics. The mountains are her metaphysics. She has no need for metaphysics to hide what she cannot make out. She brings home the deepest matters of the heart all too clearly. This was never more evident than in "Defeat."

The catastrophic fall of France is brought down to everyday life. To fully appreciate Kay Boyle among the nerve roots, one has only to read Jean-Pierre Rioux's *La France de la Quatrième République,* Volume I. Rioux's terrible tale is of brave men fighting and dying for a new and liberated France that was reclaimed as early as 1947 by the old and rotten Vichy loyalists.

The sinews of this postwar defeat are in Kay Boyle's prophetic story. But it is Kay Boyle's achievement that she came to the inner war zone without economic theories or theories of history but as a storyteller of first born facts.

It was the same in Nazi Germany. Rousset in *The Other Kingdom* claims at "each economic cataclysm, each financial collapse, whole sections of German society crumbled away." Kay Boyle shows us there was no remorse after their bestial murdering. When the post-war Germans got on their feet with the help of the Americans, restaurants proved how exclusive they were by discriminating against GIs. The inhuman touch is all the facts we need. At the beginning Kay Boyle saw her friends running away not from an invader but from their own people.

In "Defeat" she brings home the raw feel, isolation and humiliation so that you understand the defeat of France as it was lived. "Defeat"

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begins so quietly—yes, the tone is ominous as in an old fashioned story—but you cannot guess the enormity of the subject to be revealed. Thus the overhanging tone adds to the story's power.

Kay Boyle connects those vital details, so easy to overlook, of a man's unraveling. A writer who caught the fall of France in the buttoning of a jacket. A retreating French soldier hastily got up in civilian clothes. A bus has safely brought him back to his hometown. Before he can reach the local café his true life has been left on the town square, poured out as if the bullet he evaded in war had hit him by his own hand.

He buttons his jacket, sets his shoulders right "like men who have been waiting in a courtroom and have finally heard their names called and stand up to take the oath and mount the witness stand. You could see them getting the words ready, revising the very quality of truth and the look in their eyes, and then . . ."

Kay Boyle knows the exact moment a man distorts his defeat to live with himself, to see how much can be explained or fantasized away so that the human ear can bear to hear the rest. The moment before truth vanishes in a shrug, and a man's war experience smelling death becomes a lie to fit in with the going truth of the day. This distorting the experience of a lifetime takes place in the blink of an eye. Where lives are left untold, Kay Boyle's story takes fire.

Defeat takes place in the heart and it is the defeat of an abiding French myth unable to sustain itself in France's darkest hour.

An entire culture is collapsed into the rich few pages of "The White Horses of Vienna." The faint of mind might wish they had never read it. The story's powerful kernel is a psychological truth that is both open ended, thus haunting, and a denial of received wisdom so that you do not want to know the truth, this truth behind "The White Horses of Vienna." You do not want to speculate on it, nonetheless be faced by it. The story goes deeply into the woods with a biblical simplicity.

Decades before the Nazis, Austria-Hungary Jews were murdered, beaten, segregated for being *German*. The German Nazis killed them for being Jews.

"The White Horses of Vienna" can be taken as a hymn to people breaking through barriers to see the good in others, or a horror story of innocence. The story is harrowing, insightful, prophetic as a horror story: ". . . books that make us happy we could, in a pinch, also write ourselves. What we need are books that hit us like a most painful misfortune . . . as though we had been banished to the woods. . . ."

An injured doctor writes from his mountain home to Vienna for a

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student doctor replacement while he recovers. The doctor is a savagely clean man, determined, compassionate and with a strong, humble pride in himself. He was a prisoner in Siberia for a year. His young, beautiful wife condemns Jews for looking amiable. Into their home comes an amiable young Jew from Vienna, Dr. Heine.

The young doctor is animated with the culture of Vienna: books, art, music, especially the "royal, white horses of Vienna, still royal . . . without any royalty left to bow their heads to, still shouldering into the arena with spirits a man would give his soul for, bending their knees in homage to the empty, canopied loge where royalty no longer sat." Applause opens their nostrils wide as if a wind were blowing: ". . . these perfect stallions who knew to a breath the beauty of even their mockery of fright."

It is Dr. Heine's good-hearted intelligence that makes his cultural innocence so terrifying. His friendly, affirming nature is quite capable of surmounting the evil around him, if only blindly. His zest for living making him incapable of seeing.

The wife, nevertheless, sees the student doctor as an unclean thing oiled by an evil lubricant. But when Dr. Heine and the wife are working close together over a patient, his coat is accidentally set aflame. She instinctively puts out the fire by holding him in her strong arms.

What escapes Kay Boyle's eye is not worth mentioning. The burnt coat is "scalloped black to his shoulders." The wife takes the blame for the accident, volunteers to redo the coat while holding him around. "And then she bit her lip suddenly and stood back, as if she had remembered the evil thing that stood between them."

Heimwehr arrive to ask the injured doctor to show them the way to the men burning a swastika fire on the mountain. They are convinced the doctor was injured coming down the mountain from a similar fire.

> The young doctor said nothing after they had gone, but he sat quiet by the window, watching the fires burning on the mountains in the dark. They were blooming now on all the black, invisible crests, marvelously living flowers of fire springing out of the arid darkness, seemingly higher than any other things could grow. He felt himself sitting defenseless there by the window, surrounded by these strong, long-burning fires of disaster. They were all about him, inexplicable signals given from one mountain to another in some secret gathering of power that cast him and his people out, forever out upon the waters of despair.

After Dollfuss is assassinated the Heimwehr return. Dr. Heine defends the doctor's character and protests his arrest in the night and

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cries out against politics. He comforts the injured doctor, presses his hand, asks how he can help. He stands in the night watching the doctor being carried down the mountain on a stretcher.

Before the Heimwehr arrive the young doctor was looking out on this scene with longings to be "indoors with the warmth of his own people, and the intellect speaking." Dr. Heine was saying within himself at the sight of little lights moving up from the valley that he took for beacons of hope, but were the Heimwehr coming for the doctor, "Come to me, come to me. I am a young man alone on a mountain. I am a young man alone, as my race is alone, lost here amongst them all."

Calling after the injured doctor being carried away, Dr. Heine promises help. He thinks in "anguish of the snow-white horses, the Lippizaners, the relics of pride, the still unbroken vestiges of beauty bending their knees to the empty loge of royalty where there was no royalty any more."

The end.

But is it? No. What rises from the story is unbearable. Dr. Heine's cultural affirmation disconnecting him from the brutal reality closing around him. Caught up in the grandeur of Vienna he becomes hopelessly defenseless. Dr. Heine himself becomes a white horse of Vienna, only with a far worse fate in store.

The end?

No. There is no end to a story where the ending keeps following you about, and makes you live with it.

I suspect that people call Kay Boyle distinguished to acknowledge her worth and keep themselves from grappling with what she sees. An invaluable recognition has come from where it counts the most—the younger generation of poets who face the world they live in. A recent collection, *American Poetry Since 1970: Up Late,* chose Kay Boyle as "an embodiment of courage . . . our link in the spirit of previous *avant-gardes*" and wisely reprinted her memorable and classic poem *Poets* to begin their anthology.

It is one kind of Kay Boyle victory over the frozen sea to describe how an age was lived and a rarer victory to locate the pain of that age and give human endurance a moving, unforgettable voice, lean as time itself, to a pain all but unutterable.

WILLIAM L. SHIRER

Kay Boyle has had not only a long life but, more important, a long life as a writer. I can think of no other American—or European-

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author who has continued to write, as she has, with no diminishing of creativity for more than six decades. Her great body of work, poems, short-stories, novels, criticism and general articles is a lasting monument to her genius.

But her achievement goes beyond that. No other writer that I can think of has been so involved so passionately and intelligently in the great social and political issues of our time. Most of us advocate this or that, make speeches, turn out pieces. Kay Boyle has done all of that—but more. She has gone to jail for expressing her beliefs.

There must be few writers too who have had such a gift for friendship. All through her life she has been blessed with loyal, devoted friends. I met Kay in Paris in the mid-Twenties when I was a fledgling journalist and she was already known as one of the most talented women writers there. Her short stories were appearing in the little magazines and she was at work on her first novel. She was part of a unique group of writers, mostly American, in Paris just beginning to be recognized: Hemingway, Fitzgerald, MacLeish, Hart Crane, Dos Passos, Gertrude Stein and Djuna Barnes. Joyce, though Irish, spent most of his time with the Americans. Kay and I have remained close friends for sixty years, kept together by a deep understanding of each other. She is, in fact, at this writing, my oldest friend. It is a relationship that has helped to sustain me through most of the century.

ROBERT C. SMITH

Kay Boyle: 1963–1988—A Friend Remembered

I was and am possibly the first and longest standing San Francisco student of Kay Boyle. Kay had just come from Connecticut and had taught many students before our first meeting in 1963 at San Francisco State.

Remarkably, my first submitted short story was set in a guest home near Walter Reed Hospital in Washington D.C. where her husband Joseph Franckenstein's condition had just been diagnosed as lung cancer. Kay thought my characterization of the guest house (Kay had stayed there) qualified as fiction, but it was close enough to reality for the eccentric innkeeper to be easily identified by her. Through this dramatic coincidence, we began a lasting friendship. Kay confided in me about meeting John Coltrane and James Baldwin at the August 1963 March on Washington. She said she thought it was Jimmy's *The Fire Next Time* and not fiction which moved the country to accept Martin Luther's King's dream and vision. I was with Kay when she received a

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telegram from Caresse Crosby regretting Joseph's death, less than a month after our first class began. "I'll have to start my life over again" Kay said, and that is exactly what she did and does every day.

Those times by today's "no standard" were revolutionary. The Center For Democratic Institutions asked Kay, Paul Jacobs, Gene Burdick and Marlon Brando to actively protest the denial of net fishing rights to the Puyallup Indians of Tacoma, Washington. Kay insisted that San Francisco State students be represented. Fishing lines were dropped, the tribe cheered, we were arrested and then treated to a spontaneous, exact rendering of the 19th-century U.S. Indian Treaty Rights by Marlon Brando in county court. When asked who we Californians were, Kay replied, "Writers!!" At that point I felt there was no separation between acting, activism and art.

At another demonstration, marching to the Oakland Induction Center, Kay, the egalitarian, walked nobly with Paul Goodman and Allen Ginsberg, but insisted that I as representative student walk ahead. A high compliment for a nameless student.

Three years later, Kay, her son, Ian, and I set out for the East Coast. In true activist spirit, each night Kay would lay out the latest Vietnam War horrors as we spoke of her Mekong Delta trip and her coming semester in Boston. We dedicated three were thwarted only by a broken universal joint in a small Arkansas town in the blackest of winter nights. Through the darkness, a pick-up truck stopped. In a few minutes Kay described our plight, the kind farmer helped us to a motel and promised to arrange for repairs. The next morning Kay was in Russellville's only department store buying children's clothes for his family. To this day, over twenty years later, Kay writes a note card and receives a Christmas card from our Arkansas farmer. For my marriage five years later, Kay sent signed copies of her major works and we still communicate through calls, letters and periodic visits to her home in Oakland.

I will always remember the Amnesty International Kay Boyle 86th Birthday Celebration in San Francisco, February 1988, when after a December heart attack Kay politely refused to be helped up to enter the Reception Hall to sing the "Marseillaise" with her younger colleagues and former students. And after 25 years, I remain a student of Kay Boyle: my teacher, mentor and friend.

ERIC SOLOMON

Kay Boyle as a colleague? Ah well, grace and rigor, beauty and

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authority. She—her photograph, really—was partially responsible for my coming to teach at San Francisco State in the fall of 1964. The *New York Times Book Review* had a picture of Kay, Wright Morris, and Mark Harris walking across the San Francisco State campus, she looking radiant and regal. For such colleagues, thought I, what price a four-course load? And when I first encountered Kay, I also discovered that we had a bond, both political and personal, that formed a basis for ultimate trust, no matter how we might differ on details: we both had spouses whose actions or families had made them enemies of the 1950s witch-hunters, CIA, FBI, HUAC. And her late husband and I had both become subversives in the eye of the State while stationed in Germany.

Thus, when students turned angry, when the Vietnam War protest led us to the streets, I most often followed Kay. She could be tough and unforgiving—one could *not* fail to show up at a march or rally after she had informed one of the event; Leo Litwak, Herb Wilner, and I found ourselves unhappily picketing morticians who handled Vietnam bodies, chanting in front of consulates . . . anything rather than face that Kay Boyle stare of icy disapproval. But when we came through, how lovely was Kay's smile of acceptance of us as comrades on her long march for social equality and peace. And whether in prison or in the streets, she always managed to look like a lady.

Only her combination of naïveté (she once asked me whether I thought a letter from James Joyce, detailing changes he wanted her to make on the manuscript of *Finnegans Wake,* might have any value) and courage (indeed, she often reminded me of Brecht's Mother Courage—outfitted according to *Vogue*) led me to turn to her in one of the crucial moments of my life as an activist. The moment was ugly at San Francisco State: thirty policemen had gotten themselves surrounded by hundreds of furious, screaming, threatening students; the police were armed, unused to this situation. When I was begged to "Do something," I turned, without much thought, to a tiny, forlorn, rag-tag picket line of fewer than a dozen faculty, resolutely recruited and led by herself, slowly moving in front of the Administration Building. "Follow me!" said I—we really *did* talk like that in 1968—and without hesitation, they did. As I realized the absurdity of this moment, for I am and always will be a coward, leading my little band towards hordes of outraged students, towards police with by-now drawn guns, I was surely tempted to turn away. But Kay Boyle, walking right behind me, at once caring and suspicious as always, muttered, "Go *on!*" Go on we did, clearing a way for the police non-violently to remove themselves, making me, for the brief moment, a hero. But I, and a generation of faculty and

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students, always knew who was really behind me, really calling for actions, not words. I've had many colleagues, but none who gave me as much, and drew as much out of me, as Kay Boyle. She was for me THE great woman of faculty courage.

JAMES STERN

Even if she were not one of North America's best and most prolific writers of this century, I would have no hesitation in calling Kay Boyle the most courageous and hard-working mother it has been my good fortune to call a friend. And it is as an old friend, Kay, that I address you today.

You were still in your twenties when we met—a tall, slim, birdlike figure with a head of beautifully waved hair. Nor do I have to wonder where this meeting took place. You yourself have confirmed it. And in print! It happened this way. As an ingenious and astonishingly generous surprise for my 70th birthday, a highly talented young English bibliophile managed secretly to find the names and addresses of some thirty friends of ours, many living as far removed from our home in Wiltshire as Dublin, Paris, Florence, Johannesburg, New York and Australia.

This young man then wrote to these friends asking them to compose a brief letter in celebration of this day—letters he had arranged to have privately printed and presented to me and each of these friends on Boxing Day of that year.

Among these letters my favorite is from Kay Boyle, in San Francisco. I find it difficult to refrain from quoting a few sentences from her first paragraph: "This is to greet you on your birthday. The older I get the more difficult I find it to use the word 'happy'. It's a word that probably came to be so overworked because it covers the evasion of many things. . . . It's possible to hide behind the word 'happy' when you don't want the discomfort of saying something more accurate." (At this point, although it may be hard to believe, I opened your book of short stories quite at random, and in the middle of page 243 you are saying: "Happy is not a word I use nowadays.") And today, 58 years later, dear Kay, that decision still holds good—as I'm sure it does with you!

But to recap: Where did we first meet? You and Laurence Vail were living high up on the Col-de-Villefranche, while I was living alone down by the sea at the Welcome Hotel, carrying on a lively correspondence with H. E. Bates about the placing of our stories. On

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reaching your house on the Col, I remember a very large man with a badly injured leg. And more vividly, the Russian-born American anarchist, Emma Goldman, a small quiet little woman in her late middle age, as little like my idea of an anarchist as anyone I had ever seen!

So, Kay, where and when do we go from high up here in Les Alpes Maritimes? Two years later, in the winter of 1933. And I am certainly not going to attempt to vie with your description of Vienna during that winter. It was "Vienna at the wrong time of year, at the wrong time of the century. . . . The streets were either covered with ice or damp with the suicidal *Föhn*. Mothers and Fathers and their young children stood barefoot on the fierce ice, shivering in doorways, their hands out, saying nothing, silently dying of hunger before our eyes. And we—Ethel Mannin, Laurence Vail, you, I—took refuge in *Weinstuben* so as not to see these people too clearly. We were in a place and a season where people lived in hell . . . and our typewriters were silent as we looked the other way."

In what corners of this planet have we seen each other since that winter, fifty-five years ago? "In Mégève," you say, "in Paris, in New York." In that order. Tania and I loved our summer visits to you and Laurence and the children in your beautifully isolated chalet, Les Cinq Enfants, above the Haute-Savoie town of Mégève. Most vivid are the climbs up the steep hill to the summit of Rochebrune for lunch, and on other warm days to swim in the *Piscine*. It was here, I think, that we first met your wonderful mother.

Presumably on account of my age, new friends take for granted that I was in Paris during the 1920s. As I wrote that sentence Tania came into the room and I told her I was trying to remember where and when I first met Kay Boyle in Paris! "Oh!" Tania exclaimed, "you mean to say you don't remember telling me one evening in great excitement that you had just met an old friend in the Deux Magots and that on the floor just inside the entrance you had noticed a basket, and in it a baby!"

And that, as you will have guessed, Kay, was your daughter Kathe!

Tania then added that this occasion must have been during the month of May 1935, some months before our marriage. How many times since then have I had to bless Tania's memory!

The list of our mutual friends in Paris would surely be too long to enumerate here. What has always fascinated me is that the one person both of us knew well, you longer and better than I, was a man I don't think we were ever together *à trois:* Robert McAlmon. My mind's eye sees Bob primarily in the company of Hilaire Hiler and Katherine Anne Porter in Montparnasse, and during one unforgettable evening with

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Nora and James Joyce in the apartment in the Rue Galilée. You, Kay, knew Bob when he was a young and wealthy widower, a Paris publisher and man of great generosity, above all towards writers in very different financial circumstances.

In 1938 McAlmon published an autobiography entitled *Being Geniuses Together*. Thirty years later you published a revised version of the same book with supplementary chapters by yourself, a volume you describe as being "part of a dialogue I have never ceased having with Robert McAlmon." Of all your numerous books, dear Kay, this is the one to which I most often refer, never tire of re-reading.

No it is about time I took my leave, less with the desire for more books than with the fervent wish that you may be blessed with Good Health for the rest of your indomitable life.

STUDS TERKEL

An Interview

Edited in consultation with Studs Terkel from an April 26, 1986, interview in Chicago with filmmaker Kelley Baker. (From "No Past Tense Permitted," a documentary in progress, courtesy of Kelley Baker, Portland, Oregon.)

Director: What do you remember about the first time you met Kay Boyle? What stands out in your mind?

Terkel: I remember an elegant looking person, at the time Nelson Algren, I believe, introduced me to Kay Boyle some years ago. I remember also having admired her before I'd met her. I remembered some of the short stories she wrote, a good number of them. When I think of Kay Boyle, I think of someone who has borne witness to the most traumatic and shattering events of our century: not simply this particular era, but of the whole 20th century. Starting early. Both as a creative artist as well as being there. We think of Kay Boyle, immediately, as the golden girl of the Twenties in Paris, and the artists who were there. She knew Joyce, you name them, Duchamp, Beckett, she was there, this girl out of Cincinnati and she was writing. You think of Kay Boyle in Europe, pre-Hitler Europe, just as Fascism was about to take over. You think of Kay Boyle being there during the Spanish Civil War that some say was the overture to World War II. She was there, in a sense, trying to celebrate the Republicans who fought Franco as well as Hitler and Mussolini while the rest of the world stood by. She, among others, a few artists, was there. You think of Kay Boyle, you think of Fascism in Central Europe; again, she was there. And always in her

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stories or whatever reportage she did, she was there bearing witness. When you think of Kay Boyle continuing, post-war, the Cold War, the McCarthy days, she again challenged and defied witch hunters. You think of Kay Boyle in the Sixties teaching at San Francisco State, defying another hunter, Hayakawa, who was the head of San Francisco State. Being on the side of whom? In every event, on the side of the young. And here, just recently, marching in Ohio, a peace march in the mid-Eighties. So we're talking about 60–65 years. All those events that one way or another, for better or for worse have altered all our lives. Kay Boyle, writer, participant, was there.

You know the old black spiritual, "Were You There, When They Crucified My Lord?" Well, she was there for a number of crucifixions, including that of one of her husbands, who was tortured by the Nazis and held his own. She has always been there. And so I think of her, I think of a survivor as well, but not *just* a survivor. We've heard the phrase, "grace under pressure"—the Hemingway. Hers has been grace under incredible pressure; more, I would say elegance under pressure. Kay Boyle is somebody, of whom, if I could use one word, I'd say, elegant.

D: We talked about politics earlier today, and Kay has been active in politics. You mentioned that a lot of people get disillusioned with politics, especially politics on the left. Do you know why Kay has stayed true to this?

T: She's the best one to answer that. Think about it now. When times go bad as they are bad now, it is very easy for someone who is older, who has gone through a great deal, to look upon the earth and say, "Oh God, hopeless." Not with her. She maintains a certain kind of, I wouldn't say optimism in a Pollyanna sense, but a certain kind of vision that she hasn't lost. And so she's with the young, forever. She is forever young. I don't mean that in any goofy commercial sort of way. It is something Jane Addams once called the spirit of youth. It's a spirit of being contemporary. She is forever contemporary. She was so in the Twenties, she was in the Thirties, she was in the witch-hunting Fifties, she was in the protesting Sixties, and she is in what you might call the perilous Eighties. She does not have the disillusioned air that some of her few surviving contemporaries might have.

D: Do you think there's a reason why she has never gotten the respect as a writer that a lot of people think she deserves?

T: I think there's a reason for that, sure. Since the word elegance was

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used about Kay Boyle, and there's an elegance to her story telling as well. We live in coarse times. The fact that Reagan is President and popular tells me how coarsened we've become. Not simply in thought, but in language as well. "Make my day." "Mad Dog." "Rambo." You think of Ronald Reagan. You think of a coarsened aspect to our lives that we've accepted as our life. Kay Boyle is precisely the opposite of that. When I spoke of elegance, I meant that. Of a certain gracefulness, in her language as well as her being, as well as I might add, her politics. That's what we're talking about. There's a vision there of something Dorothy Day, the Catholic worker of years ago, said when they once asked her, "Why are you doing what you're doing?" She was arrested and she was active in protesting war and injustice wherever she found it. Dorothy Day replied, "I'm doing it to help in some way make a world in which it would be easier for people to behave *decently*." In a sense that's the credo of Kay Boyle. We live in a time right now in which *in*decency appears to be the credo of the day. Kay is the outsider in that respect. Because her vision has never been lost. She is perpetually contemporary, and young.

D: Do you have a favorite story by Kay?

T: I have no favorite stories, just seeing her is always a delight. Of course she is ever greenly beautiful. She always seems shocked by coarse behavior. But at the same time recognizing it as being there. I find that kind of funny, I get a bang out of her. And of course as you know Kay is a—how can you describe her?—she's a very attractive woman. I mean she must have been sensational when she was twenty. I mean she's more so now.

D: Can you talk a little bit more about her looks, her surprise?

T: There's always an air of surprise about her. Remember her looks now, she has that Grecian profile. John Barrymore had that, as a male. Barrymore and Kay. Looking at her as a young beauty in those photographs, Man Ray, wow! She knew everybody, whether it's in her correspondence with Samuel Beckett, or with Nelson Algren here in Chicago, the air of being astonished. It occurred to me as we're talking, Kay Boyle at a certain age today has never lost that air of wonder, I think the word is wonder. I think a true artist always has this. Something that Charlie Chaplin had. Sometimes you're surprised at her surprise. Why is she surprised at some lousy behavior by someone? Or something that is unexpectedly decent, or nice? I suppose you'd say it's a young girl's air of surprise. I wouldn't say innocence and yet there's an

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air of innocence too. Because of that vision she has. Not of what is, but of what can be. I think she's afraid, I would suspect she's afraid of nothing. I don't mean there's a sense of bravado going, I don't think she's afraid of the outsider, of that different person. Though she herself lives in this white-dominated society and WASP-dominated society, of which she is part ethnically, you see, she's an outsider: in that she questions, something's gotta be better. Always she spoke for those up against it.

I wouldn't want to cross her. As S. I. Hayakawa found out, when he was head of San Francisco State. When he first met her, he just bowed. I'd known him in Chicago as a semanticist and a jazz fan. He and I both emceed Mahalia Jackson concerts. I didn't know him as he later became what he became. Whether it was a U. S. senator who slept most of the time. When he opened his mouth, you hoped he'd keep on sleeping. But, here came the little tyrant, the little martinet. Kay Boyle was on that campus, and so she spoke out always. The idea of her marching, you know, just a couple of days before this conversation we're having, marching in Ohio, in Bowling Green, or nearby, on behalf of peace, with kids sixty years younger than she is. And she is one of the youngest there marching. As she did in the Sixties, as she spoke out in the Thirties. So it's Boyle forever.

D: What was it about the short story in New York, "The Ballet In Central Park" that you . . .

T: One of her lesser known. We always think of Kay Boyle's celebrated stories but there's one, that I read on the air, on the radio show . . . One of her lesser known stories, "Ballet in Central Park," deals with childhood, and a certain loss of innocence. It's this little WASP girl and these Hispanic kids from a different community. They're getting together in this park with other kids. He's pretending he's a matador, and the tragic result. What is here is a tenderness and a gentleness that surely captured childhood. Not just childhood, but the child's visions of two different classes, see, and both merging. A very moving tale. It was a natural for me to put some music to it, a little Flamenco, touching on this kid putting on the act. That story as much as the celebrated "White Horses of Vienna" hit me, you see. Before I'd read any of her stories, I saw a piece in the *Nation,* I believe, oh God, centuries ago. It was Kay Boyle's remembering a young drunken poet entertaining at a bar somewhere in London, and it was Dylan Thomas. She was describing this young poet who was drunk and making a fool of himself, yet she, and I believe her husband with her, recognized this, this genius who was

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being a clown. That was a terribly moving piece. So always there's this common denominator, I think, of her understanding that person outside.

And she didn't have to do the things she did, you see, because I think she could've written her own ticket, she could've been the Belle of Cincinnati. If anybody wants to be the Belle of Cincinnati. I think that's the last thing that Kay Boyle would want. But I think she could have been anything. Or the Belle of Paris for that matter. But naw, there was always that outsider, that outsider she was looking at too.

D: How do you feel she deals with young writers?

T: There's nobody better than Kay in dealing with young writers, or young would-be writers. For one thing you can tell from her correspondence with yourself, with me, with scores of others to whom she writes. Longhand of course. You know that hand immediately, when you pick up that envelope and you see that handwriting you know it's Kay Boyle. With Oakland, San Francisco, or Cottage Grove, Oregon, or Bowling Green, Ohio, you know it's Kay Boyle. Or it could be Paris, and you open the letter and there's that handwriting, and there's the detail and that curiosity. I remember the first time I ever heard her talk, it was about young writers. It wasn't about herself, you see. She could've easily talked about the Twenties, the golden girl, Kay Boyle in Paris with the now institutionalized figures. She could've easily talked about being in Central Europe as Hitler was taking over, and as he took over. Or about Spain. No, she was talking about young writers. Some of whom she recognized as possibly serious. And that was always there, and I guess that she's a magnificent teacher because of the interest she takes. And somehow, there's commitment, that's the other aspect of Kay. She's certainly not an art-for-art's-sake writer. Though her work is serious artistically as critics through the years can attest. What's more important, readers who have been influenced by her, whose lives have been touched by her, know it, too. At the same time she is this committed person. She doesn't separate the two. Never a tract, not a political tract, it's a work of art that she offers. At the same time there's the sense of being a part of a time. And participating in that time. Having a point of view. She's not someone who is objectively portraying a scene. I believe she doesn't believe there's such a thing as objectivity.

Kay Boyle also wanted remembrance of some of her contemporaries, some who were younger, who had died. And so she started the Nelson Algren Fellowship because of her admiration for Algren, whom you called the Bard of Chicago, and he was. So she kept going, she

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wrote to writers and others for contributions for the Algren fellowship. She was the first judge of the Nelson Algren short story contest sponsored by a magazine here in Chicago. Just as she is encouraging young writers, she works hard to keep green the memories of some of her contemporaries, the younger ones who have died. Just as she's part of history herself, as witness and writer, so she wants to maintain it in a literary sense for the other writers she's admired. Who are no longer around.

D: Why do you think she champions some of the down and out writers, some of the neglected writers?

T: Why does she? . . . Well, again this is part of the thing that we're talking about. Why wouldn't she, being Kay Boyle? She'd champion the writers being neglected, put down. There has to be talent, I mean the giftedness has to be there. Why is Kay Boyle not better known? That's another story. Again we come to what we talked about earlier, things are out of joint when someone like Kay Boyle is not as celebrated as she should be.

APPLE VAIL

From a letter to her mother, Kay Boyle, written in the early 1950s

my kline, i have tried to write capital letters on this letter but as you can see they dont work. i have no patience to change the ribbon or whatever it needs right now for i want to write to you immediately. i thank you so much for your letter which made me miss you all the more as it brought you closer. i too had a great urge to jump into the car as you drove off past the porte doree, and felt a great loneliness for you were gone. the drive to frankfurt was really you leaving for america. you know how different it is . . . it is as a strong childhood memory forever, those walks we had to bad-godesberg with you and domino, and though i was often silent i felt very happy and all young just to be walking by your side. i love you very much, kline, so much . . . and of course feel that i never say it to you.

since you have left i have seen people, and painted a bit, but you are so much with me and your image is always there.

politics are terrible . . . i mean that i have seen pierre quite a bit, and have talked to tina and feel incapable to talk about you which is what they want, for one is immediately condemning all america which of course isn't the problem. even if i hated all america it seems to me one should be able to see at least those who are fighting for what they still

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believe in. enfin pierre is not at all bad, au contraire is very anti communist on many points, but still i understand your attitude so well that it annoys one to talk against america, because it gives them pleasure whatever the question is.
my kline, i love you, and i was happy to be with you, and will always remember our walks, and your face in the car. tonight tu sais, i cannot visualize it without tears coming to my eyes because i love you tellement, pour toujours,

Apple

Kay Boyle's note: "Apple always, since she was very young, called me 'Kline,' pronounced 'Klin,' and I always called her 'Pudie.' I don't know why. I had driven from Frankfurt to Paris to visit with my children, and drove back alone. Domino was our dalmatian dog. Pierre was a middle-aged friend of the family for many years. We always disagreed with him. Tina was the younger daughter of Maria and Gene Jolas." [*Eugene Jolas was the editor of* transition.]

KATHE VAIL

From a 1987 letter to her mother, Kay Boyle

If Christmases mean so much in my children's lives that they continue to make me celebrate it with a beautiful Christmas tree, which Kolia and Yannick spend three hours decorating with ornaments I have kept for twenty or twenty-five years, this comes from the most beautiful Christmases, in Mégève and in New York, that *you* prepared for us all. (Papa was impossible! He was always horrible at Xmas, making scenes and all!) This is nothing much at the same time that it is *everything!* You always gave us enthusiasm and hope, while Papa cared for us. I have tried to explain to Kolia and Myrine and Yannick that if they are "different" about racism and a lot of other things, it was because of the way they were brought up . . . My Mimi, I am so proud of you. You are such a help to me night and day—

Your Kat

Kay Boyle's note: "Kathe always called me 'Mimi' and my name for her was 'Pussy Kat,' or 'Kat.'" Kolia and Yannick are Kathe's son and elder daughter. Myrine is Kathe's younger daughter.

SHARON WALSH

To Mama

I cannot add

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Nor even subtract
Not multiply
Neither divide
The number so simple
The only figure
I can understand
But one, the only one,
One and all.

Written by Kay Boyle's eldest daughter while she was a high school student in Nyack, New York, 1942.

GEORGE WICKES

Kay, the Indomitable

The last time I saw Kay Boyle she was flat on her back in a small town hospital in Oregon, suffering from a fractured spine and obviously in pain. Yet she was determined to leave the next day for Oakland, California, over 500 miles away. And leave she did, disregarding doctor's orders, lying in the back of a car driven by her son Ian. I don't know how she made it.

Kay had been living in Cottage Grove, Oregon, for four and a half years, having moved there to be near Ian, who was then working for the local radio station. After selling her house in San Francisco, Kay had thought of moving back East or to Santa Fe but had finally decided on Oregon almost as an afterthought.

In Cottage Grove Kay was known as "Ian's mom," for Ian was a familiar figure in town while she was unknown. In the two years he had lived there Ian had made many friends, some of whom wanted him to run for mayor. He lived in a house on K street, which Kay liked to use as her address, though she lived in her own house with her cats.

Kay arrived on December 10, 1980, two days after the assassination of John Lennon, just in time to join Ian and a group of friends in a memorial on a nearby hill called Mt. David. Though twice the age of the others, she clambered up the very steep trail to the top of Mt. David, where they all joined hands for ten minutes of silence, after which they played recordings of John Lennon's music and sang some of his songs. Kay may not have known who John Lennon was, Ian says, but she was certainly game.

Cottage Grove, Oregon, is hard to believe, a rural backwater that looks like a survival from another era, when most Americans lived in small country towns. Its population of 7,000 is dominated by the timber

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industry, with loggers and mill workers the principal breadwinners. If I hadn't visited Kay there, I would have a hard time imagining someone so cosmopolitan in that setting. Yet Kay adapted readily to Cottage Grove and found its citizens friendly because she was friendly herself and took an interest in them. When she invited my wife and me to dinner at The Cottage restaurant, we got the impression that everyone in town knew her. They may not have known what to make of this lady, but they knew they liked her.

This was Kay's first experience of living in small town America, and she was intrigued by the customs, the folkways, the political attitudes, the whole way of life, so different from anything she had ever known. She had lived in small towns in France but never in this country. What astonished her most was the number of churches—over thirty—and the variety of sects. At one point she thought of writing a book on the churches of Cottage Grove and began doing research on them. When she sampled some of the church services, she was appalled at what she heard. Cottage Grove could hardly be accused of being liberal or enlightened in any of its views.

Still, Kay managed to find a number of like-minded Grovers and started up an Amnesty International group. Several of the women she knew made friendship quilts and exchanged them with Russian women. Predictably, they were denounced by the radio station for their communist activities, but this was nothing new to Kay, who, needless to say, remained undaunted and undeterred.

Kay's sojourn in Cottage Grove ended painfully. She had had a number of serious problems with her health but had borne up stoically through them all. Finally one night when she was out in her front yard gazing up at the sky she fell and broke a vertebra in her back and a bone in her foot. The time had come to return to California where she could have better medical attention and be near old friends. Ian found the house in Oakland where she now lives and on May 7, 1985, took her from the hospital for that long and surely excruciating journey. Now when I talk with Kay on the telephone, her voice is that of a young girl, and I find it hard to visualize her as she was the last time I saw her.

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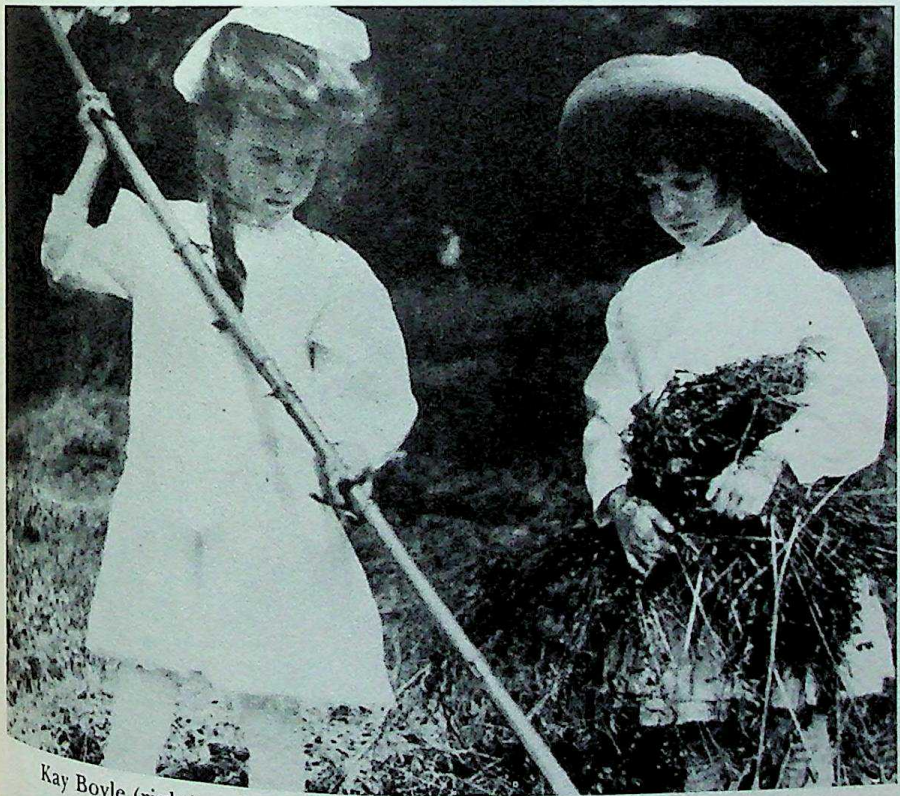
Collection of Kay Boyle

Kay Boyle, Germantown, Pennsylvania, c. 1906



Collection of Kay Boyle

Kay Boyle (right) and her sister, Joan, Germantown, Pennsylvania, c. 1906

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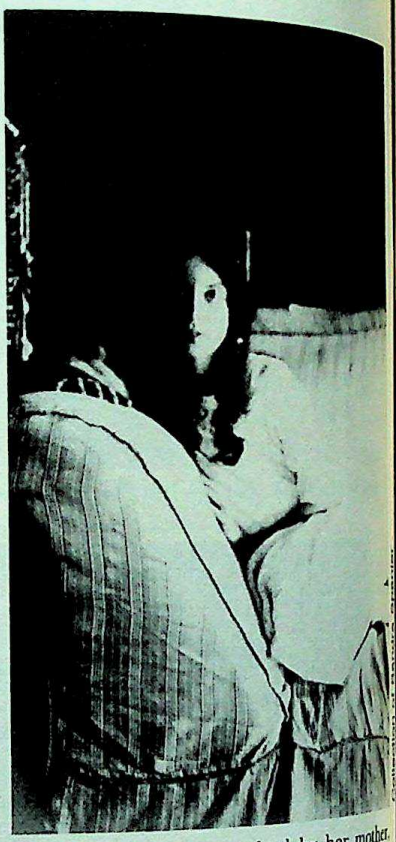
Collection of Kay Boyle

Joan and Kay Boyle, wearing "Kate Greenaway" dresses just purchased on a visit to London. Philadelphia, c. 1910



Kay Boyle, photographed by her mother. Beach Haven, New Jersey, c. 1912

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Collection of Kay Boyle

Kay Boyle, Cincinnati, 1918

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Sylvia Beach Collection

Ernest Walsh, 1925

Kay Boyle Papers

Harry and Caresse Crosby at their country house, Le Moulin, Ermonville, France, 1928

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Black Sun Press Archives

From left: Countess of Polignac, Laurence Vail, Kay Boyle, Hart Crane, and Caresse Crosby, Le Moulin, 1929

Black Sun Press Archives

Kay Boyle and Harry Crosby, Le Moulin, 1929, with the tombstone Harry and Caresse had carved with their names in an acrostic in anticipation of a double suicide they planned for 1942. Harry Crosby committed suicide in New York in December, 1929.

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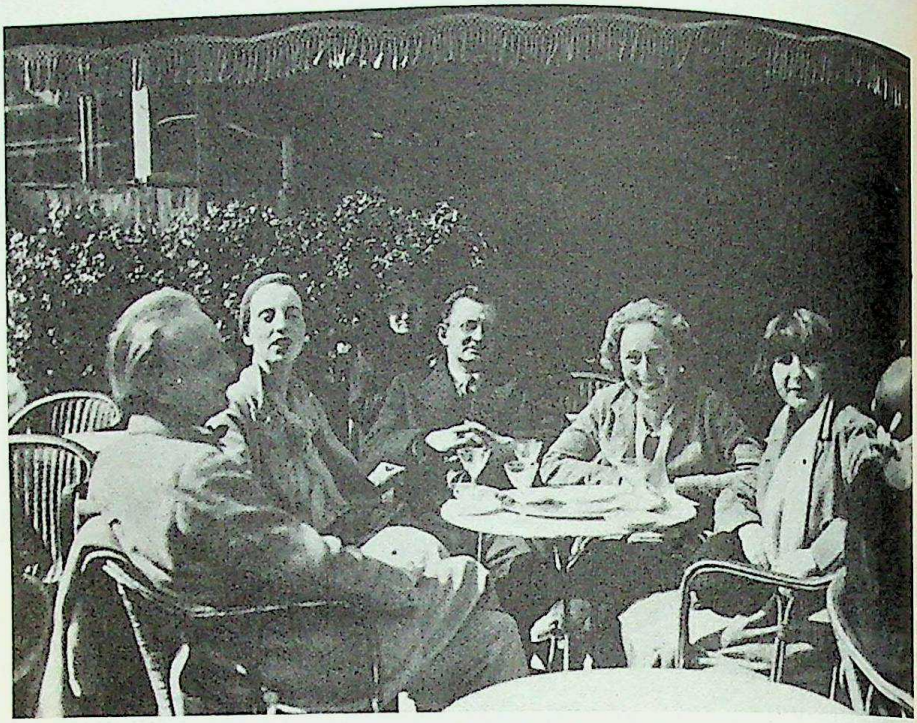

On the terrace of the Monte Carlo Casino Cafe. From left: Laurence Vail, Kay Boyle, Alfred Kreymborg, Clotilde Vail, and Dorothy Kreymborg.

Kay Boyle in her hotel room in Kitzbühel, Austria, with newspapers used as sources for *365 Days,* a book of 365 short stories, one for each day of 1934, that she edited with Laurence Vail and Nina Conarain

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Munkacsi

Kay Boyle on a country road in upstate New York with her daughters Clover, Kathe, and Apple-Joan Vail, and Sharon Walsh, 1941

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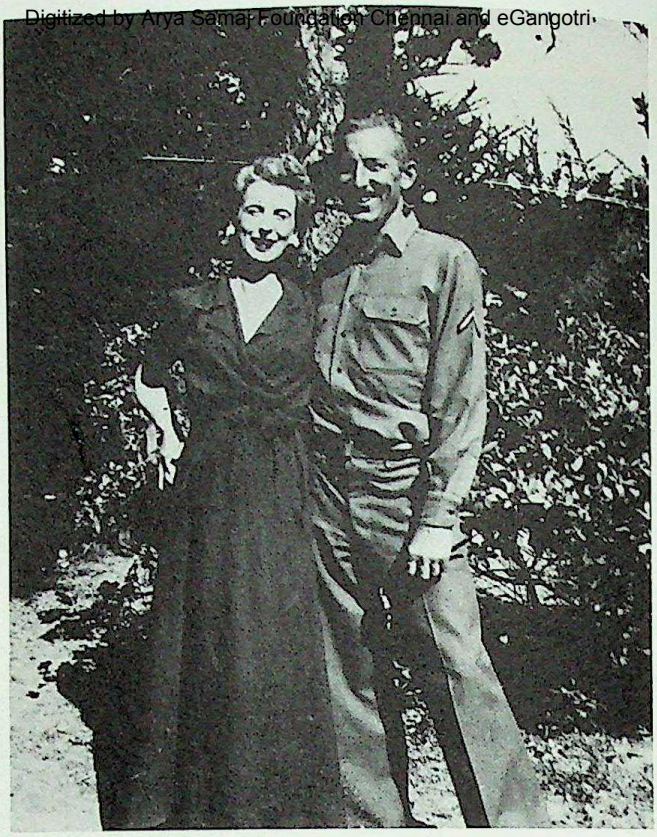
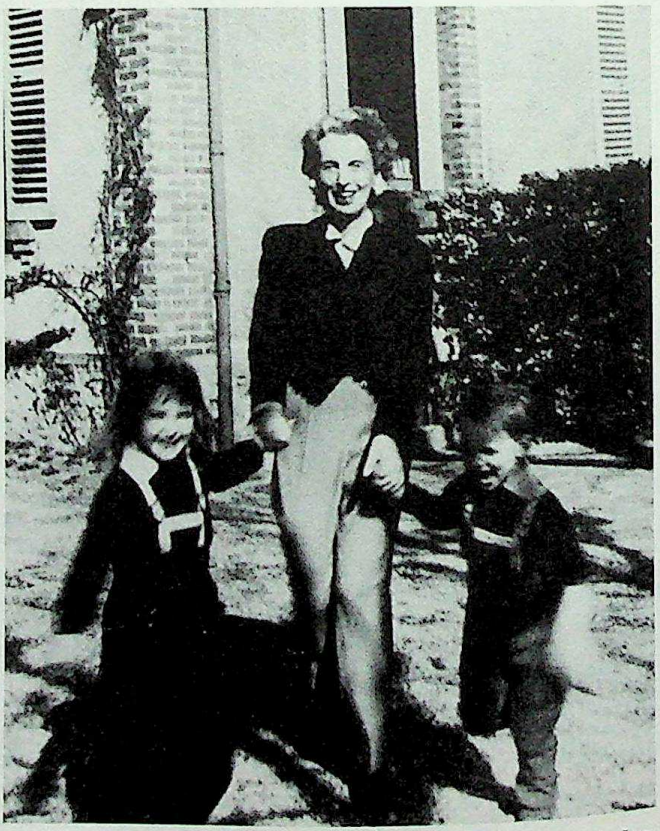


Collection of Kay Boyle

Boyle and husband Joseph Franckenstein, Carmel, California, 1943



Collection of Kay Boyle

Boyle with her two youngest children, Faith and Ian Franckenstein, Le Vesinè, France, 1947

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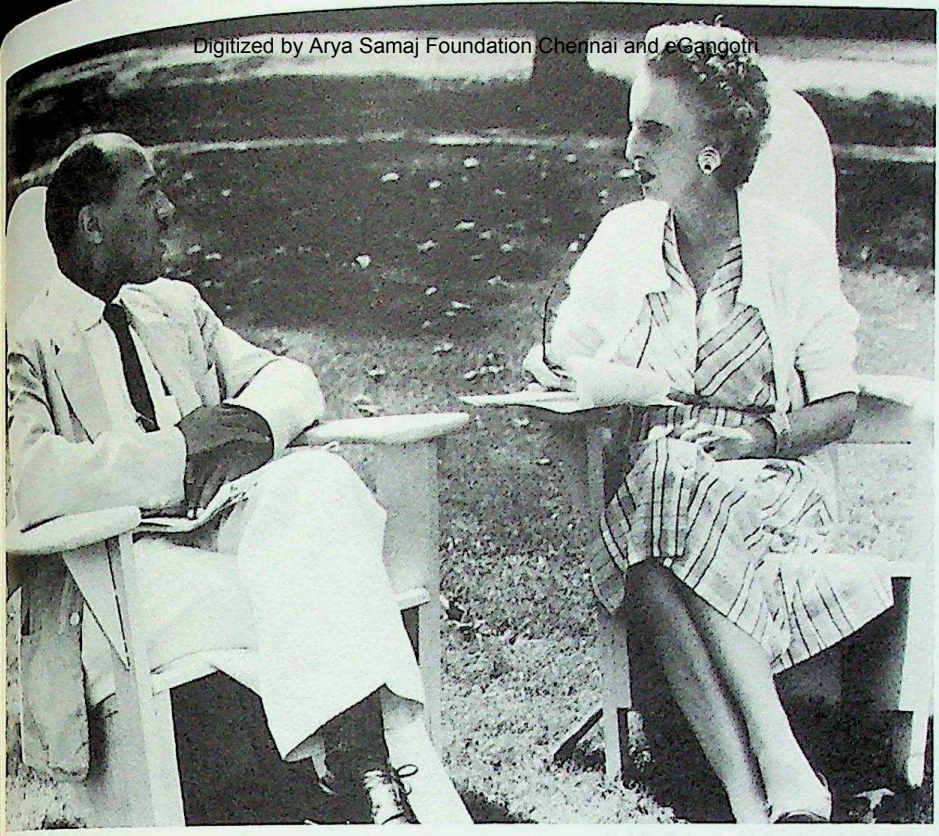
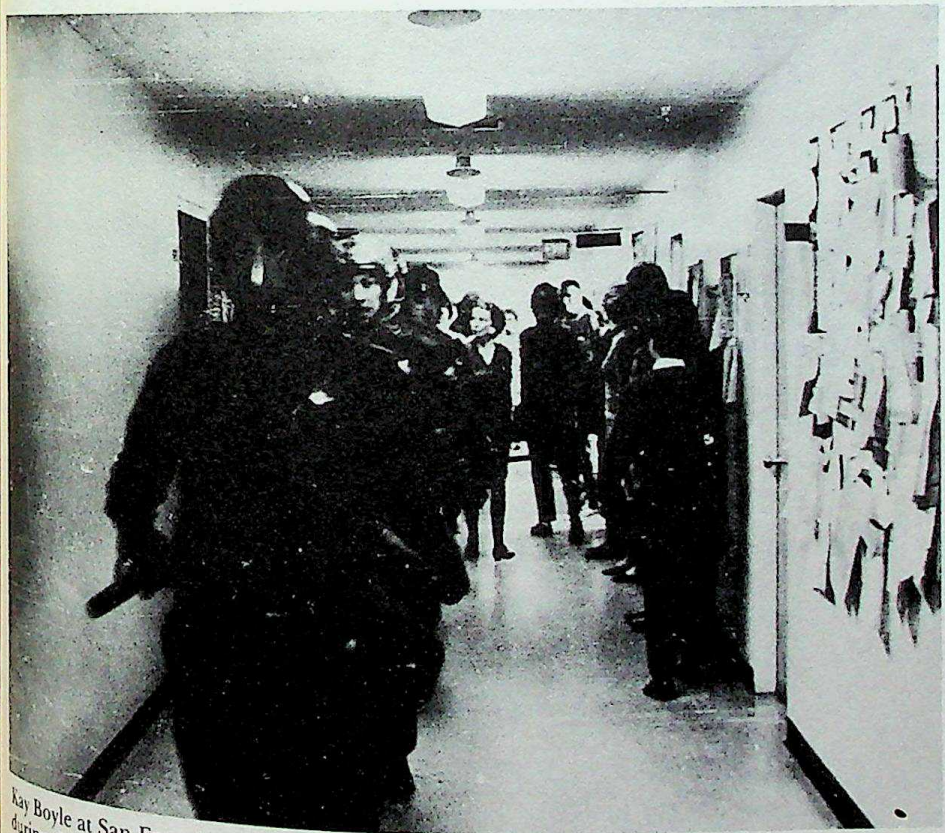


Collection of Kay Boyle

Boyle teaching at the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, 1956



Bob Wax

Kay Boyle at San Francisco State trying to prevent the Tac Squad from arresting students during the 1967–68 strike

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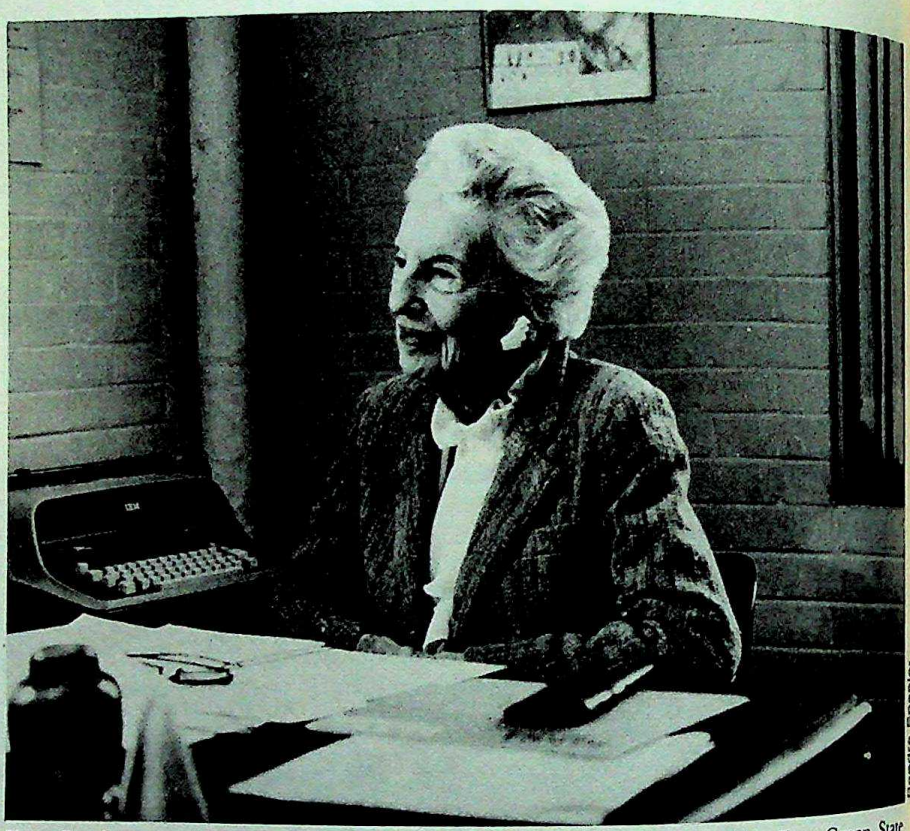

Kay Boyle as writer-in-residence conferring with a student at Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio, April, 1986

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Bob Bryant

Grace Paley, Kay Boyle, Dorothy Bryant, and Frances Steloff, founder of Manhattan's Gotham Book Mart, at Kay Boyle's 85th birthday party, a benefit reading for Amnesty International. San Francisco, February, 1987

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Kay Boyle at her home in Oakland, California, following the taping of an interview for the NBC "Today" show, June, 1988

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The Somnambulists

William Carlos Williams

There is, in a democracy, a limit beyond which thought is not expected to leap. All men being presumed equal, it becomes an offense if this dead limit be exceeded. But within the opacity which encloses them the American people are bright, active and efficient. They believe in science and philosophy and work hard to control disease, to master the crime in their cities and to prevent the excessive drinking of alcohol. Alcohol is the specific for their condition, thus they fear it; to drink to excess breaks the shell of their lives so that momentarily, when they drink, they waken. Or they drink, under subterfuge, as much as they may desire, but it is a public offense, for all that, which the very drinkers themselves acknowledge.

When one wakes from that sleep, literature is among the things which confront him, old literature to begin with and finally the new. In the United States let us say first Emily Dickinson and then Kay Boyle. To waken is terrifying. Asleep, freedom lives. Awake, Emily Dickinson was torn apart by her passion; driven back to cover she imprisoned herself in her father's garden, the mark of injury she deplored, an opacity beyond which she could not penetrate. And in literature, since it is of literature that I am writing, it is the mark of our imprisonment by sleep, the continuous mark, that in estimating the work of E. D., still our writers praise her rigidity of the sleep walker—the rapt gaze, the thought of Heaven—and the structural warping of her lines, the rhymelessness, the distress marking the place at which she turned back.

This review of Kay Boyle's first book, *Short Stories* (Paris: Black Sun Press, 1929), originally appeared in *transition,* 18 (November 1929). From IMAGINATIONS (Copyright © 1932 by William Carlos Williams; Copyright © 1970 by Florence H. Williams); used by permission of New Directions Publishing Corp.

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She was a beginning, a trembling at the edge of waking—and the terror it imposes. But she could not, and so it remains.

It remains with us the wilderness, the Indians, the forest, the night, the New World,—as already pointed out. Kay Boyle was quick to take up this realization. A woman, as fully impassioned as was her famous compatriot, but trembling today on the other side of waking, her short stories assault our sleep. They are of high degree of excellence; for that reason they will not succeed in America, they are lost, damned. Simply, the person who has a comprehensive, if perhaps disturbing view of what takes place in the human understanding at moments of intense living, and puts it down in its proper shapes and color, is anathema to United Statesers and can have no standing with them. We are asleep.

In some moods it may be charming, a breaking and holding that reminds one of surf on rocks. But good God, it is the breaking of the barriers to our lives that is human, not the dashing of ourselves to pieces on granite that we should praise. We try and yet we do not lift a finger. In what country will such freedom of intercourse exist among school children? And in what country, on the other hand, is the fear of genius so pronounced in the midst of such overpowering wealth? In what other country, its potential home, could a jazz opera by a German composer be received and paid for while not the faintest flick of support and encouragement is accorded to a man like George Antheil, an outstanding genius among us, whose works Germany and France both have honored? The German work which we have accepted is pale, abstract, removed from direct contact with our lives, an opera in a foolish dream. Antheil's work hits home. It is one of our characteristics that we distrust each other and are rivals to show how appreciative we are of foreign distinction. Antheil is antipathetic to us. It is that we fear to awaken and in sleep all are equal.

The phenomenon of our attitude toward the work of George Antheil and what must be Kay Boyle's reception; the brilliant newspapers actively trembling under a veil; the work of the poet H. D.; the young wife that walked six blocks asleep in her husband's pajamas one winter's night, the pants' bottoms trailing in the mud; the boy that, thinking himself in an airplane, dived from a window in a dream head down upon the gravel path—this is America accurately delineated. It is the School Board which, to make a rule, made a rule that forbids themselves from smoking at their evening meetings in the school building in order that they might prevent the janitors from smoking in the building while cleaning up the dirt after school. Fear to vary from the average, fear to feel, to see, to know, to experience—save under the

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opacity of a mist of equality, a mist of common mediocrity is our character.

The quality of Kay Boyle's stories has in it all of this strain. They are simple, quite simple, but an aberrant American effect is there in the style. There is something to say and one says it. That's writing. But to say it one must have it alive with the overtones which give not a type of statement but an actual statement that is alive, marked with a gait and appearance which show it to be the motion of an individual who has suffered it and brought it into fact. This is style. Excellence comes from overcoming difficulties. Kay Boyle has the difficulty of expression by Americans firmly in her mind and at the same time the female difficulties to make them more difficult. And yet, showing all this, the work may be done simply and directly; not with the horrible contortions, the agony of emission, the twisting and groaning and deforming effort of statement, seeking to disclose what it dare not acknowledge, the style of the repugnant Jurgen, tortured without relief in his quiet Richmond library—free from interruption. Kay Boyle has succeeded in writing of difficult matters clearly and well and with a distinction that is outspoken and feminine—not resorting to that indirection and tortured deformity of thought and language, that involved imagery which allows us to lie and hide while we enjoy, the peep style of a coward.

Why do American artists go to France and continue to do so and when there to drink, if they are wise, heavily? It is not postwar hysteria as the newspapers and monthly reviews would make us believe—for it has always been the same. It is not, to repeat, postwar hysteria. We do not go there out of courtesy to the French. We go out of our direct need. Paris is the one place in the world that offers the West its compensation, and opportunity, in all its deformity of spirit to awaken. Drink breaks the savage spell of nonentity, or equality as they call it, which chokes them in the great western republic. In France, they find themselves, they drink and they are awakened, shocked to realize what they are, amazed loosed—as, in fact, they on their part shock and arouse the tenderest sentiments of astonishment and tolerance among the French. They are, in fact, for the first time in their lives—and it is curious—with the sound frequently of slops emptied from a bucket. Not always; however. Possibly, it will be enlightening, if something of spiritual worth is uncovered. But most that appears is stale, mediocre, not equal to the continental. The women, Americans, get to show their bodies—I don't mean the contours only—and American women in Paris have been anonymously very successful in latter years. At their best they

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are perhaps always anonymous. They seem delightfully exotic with their natural faces, pretty legs and feet and shoes.

Kay Boyle, in her stories, reveals herself, her body, as women must in any art and almost never do in writing, save when they are exceptionally distinguished. It is France again and she, partly from her own tragic history, more by France and alcohol, is awake. She has shown more than the exterior of her purely American female body. I don't know any other place where this has occurred. I speak of a work of art as a place where action has occurred as it occurs nowhere else. Kay Boyle has profited by her release to do a stroke of excellence which her country should honor her for. It never will.

It is a false hope, pathetic and amusing at the same time—like an old woman dying of a worn-out heart, broken over the loss of a pet dog, who refuses treatment but keeps a chicken wish-bone between her swollen feet under the bedclothes—that a man should think he can solve the everlasting and everpresent problem of making of literary excellence in a quiet, sane and orderly manner, using the same old wordbound ideas that have been successful with writers in the past, by the virtuous exercise of reason alone. The new is disorderly and lacks, it may be, all correlation with a ready body of listeners—who must be sacrificed—but it does not at least pretend to believe that out of old wrecks of thought, once successful, it can constitute by substitution and rearrangement alone that which is living, young and able.

Surely excellence kills sales. Why is an outspoken statement of this plain fact, known the world over to publishers and writers, always so carefully avoided? I know it is a cover in which writers hide their pique and, naturally, just because a work does not sell does not prove it good. But it certainly is known that even when excellence has a market, such a success is rarely its own but must be suspect, from the artist's viewpoint. Nearly always some quite accidental and therefore unimportant genre which such a work shows will be found to be the cause of its popularity. It is worthwhile in considering the extraordinary modeling and sure technique of Kay Boyle's work, what she has avoided and what included, to know that she has also written two novels (being hard pressed for cash) which two prominent New York publishers (one of them had given her his word that he would print her first novel) with typical cupidity have turned down.

This is the sum and sum again of the publishing situation in America. Plain it is and has always been and must be to anyone that the best is untimely as well as rare, new and therefore difficult of recognition, without immediate general interest (any more than a

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tomato was until prejudice had been knocked down) therefore, dependent on discerning support (without expectation of money benefit) from the able; scantily salable—and without attraction for the book trade. While wonders are advertised. And it is at the same time true that the only thing of worth in writing is this difficult, priceless thing that refreshes the whole field which it enters, perennially, when it will, the new.

The great and blackguardly American publishers, catering to the somnolence, think always and only of cash and, bat-blind, seeking to seem to favor the new out of fear lest they must foot for now that which is first salable, new in appearance only, but mediocre and trite in fact. There is nothing to be done about it, nothing except to continue to envision the fact and to continue, difficult as it may be, to build a new means of access to new work separate from the agents in control and their fashionable pimps.

Few women have written like this before, work equal in vigor to anything done by a man but with a twist that brings a new light into the whole Sahara of romanticism, a twist that carries the mind completely over until the male is not the seeing agent but the focus of the eye. The dirty tradition of women's modesty and the cringing of women behind law and tradition gets an airing that certainly calls for a protest from the corrupt puritans. The usual reader will not be used to fairness from a woman, this straightforward respect for the writer's trade. Nearly all the noteworthy women writers of the past that I can think of, or nearly all, have been men, essentially. Perhaps I should have said, all the women writers acceptable to the public.

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Kay Boyle: Example to the Young

Katherine Anne Porter

Miss Kay Boyle's way of thinking and writing stems from sources still new in the sense that they have not been supplanted. She is young enough to regard them as in the category of things past, a sign I suppose, that she is working in a tradition and not in a school. Gertrude Stein and James Joyce were and are the glories of their time and some very portentous talents have emerged from their shadows. Miss Boyle, one of the newest, I believe to be among the strongest. At present she is identified as one of the *transition* group, but these two books just published should put an end to that. What is a group, anyhow? In this one were included—as associate editors and contributors to *transition*—many Americans: Harry Crosby, William Carlos Williams, Hart Crane, Matthew Josephson, Isidor Schneider, Josephine Herbst, Murray Godwin, Malcolm Cowley, John Herrman, Laura Riding—how many others?—and Miss Boyle herself. They write in every style under heaven and they spent quite a lot of time fighting with each other. Not one but would have resented, and rightly, the notion of discipleship or of interdependence. They were all vigorous not so much in revolt as in assertion, and most of them had admirably subversive ideas. Three magazines sustained them and were sustained by them: *transition*, Ernest Walsh's *This Quarter* and *Broom*. The tremendous presences of Gertrude Stein and James Joyce were everywhere about them, and so far as Miss Boyle is concerned, it comes to this: that she is a part of the most important literary movement of her time.

This review of *Wedding Day and Other Stories* (1930) and Boyle's first novel, *Plagued by the Nightingale* (1931), was originally published in the *New Republic*, 22 April 1931. Reprinted here with the permission of Isabel Bayley, Literary Trustee for Katherine Anne Porter.

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She sums up the salient qualities of that movement: a fighting spirit, freshness of feeling, curiosity, the courage of her own attitude and idiom, a violently dedicated search for the meanings and methods of art. In these short stories and this novel there are further positive virtues of the individual temperament: health of mind, wit and the sense of glory. All these are qualities in which the novel marks an advance over the stories, as it does, too, in command of method.

The stories have a range of motive and feeling as wide as the technical virtuosity employed to carry it. Not all of them are successful. In some of the shorter ones, a straining of the emotional situation leads to stridency and incoherence. In others, where this strain is employed as a deliberate device, it is sometimes very successful—as notably in "Vacation Time," an episode in which an obsessional grief distorts and makes tragic a present situation not tragic of itself; the reality is masked by drunkenness, evaded by hysteria, and it is all most beautifully done. "On the Run" is a bitter story of youth in literal flight from death, which gains on it steadily; but the theme deserved better treatment.

In such stories as "Episode in the Life of an Ancestor" and "Uncle Anne," there are the beginnings of objectiveness, a soberer, richer style; and the sense of comedy, which is like acid sometimes, is here gayer and more direct. In "Portrait" and "Polar Bears and Others," Miss Boyle writes of love not as if it were a disease, or a menace, or a soothing syrup to vanity, or something to be peered at through a microscope, or the fruit of original sin, or a battle between the sexes, or a bawdy pastime. She writes as one who believes in love and romance—not the "faded flower in a buttonhole," but love so fresh and clear it comes to the reader almost as a rediscovery in literature. It was high time someone rediscovered it. There are other stories, however—"Spring Morning," "Letters of a Lady," "Episode in the Life of an Ancestor"—in which an adult intelligence plays with destructive humor on the themes of sexual superstition and pretenses between men and women. "Madame Tout Petit," "Summer," "Theme" and "Bitte Nehmen Sie die Blumen" are entirely admirable, each one a subtle feat in unraveling a complicated predicament of the human heart. "Wedding Day," the title story, is the least satisfactory, displaying the weakness of Miss Boyle's strength in a lyricism that is not quite poetry.

The novel, *Plagued by the Nightingale,* has the same germinal intensity as the shorter works, but it is sustained from the first word to last by a sure purpose and a steadier command of resources. The form, structure and theme are comfortably familiar. The freshness and brilliancy lie in the use of the words and the point of view.

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It is the history of an American girl married to a young Frenchman, and living for a short period in the provinces with his wealthy bourgeois family. There is Papa, a blustering old fool, though Bridget never says it quite so plainly; Maman, a woman of energy, good will and appalling force of character; three unmarried sisters, Annick, Julie and Marthe; Charlotte the eldest sister, married to her cousin; Pierre the elder brother, a young doctor; and Nicholas, Bridget's husband. A taint in the blood causes eccentrics and paralytics to blossom like funeral wreaths in every generation. Nicholas is warned by his weakened legs that the family disease is likely to be the main portion of his inheritance. He is dependent on his people, his wife is dowerless. Charlotte's husband is little better than an imbecile, but he is wealthy. Uncle Robert, a perverse old maid of a man, is also wealthy, and he amuses himself by tampering with family affairs; the victims endure him in the hope that he may give someone money sometime. First and last it is the question of money that agitates the family bosom.

The three younger daughters are waiting, each in her own way, for a proposal of marriage from Luc, an idolized young doctor, who nonchalantly enjoys the privilege of the devoted family without asking to become a member. Bridget is a vigorous personality, with powerful hates and loves, a merciless eye, and a range of prejudices which permits no offense against her secret faiths to be trivial. She has gayety and charm, and at first she is ingenuously fond of this household of persons so closely and tenderly bound, so united in their aims. Nicholas feels quite otherwise. He hates his dear good sweet people who are so warmly kind in small things, so hideously complacent and negligent in the larger essentials. He needs help, restitution really, from this family that has brought him disabled into the world. His father brutally—that is to say, with the utmost fatherly kindness—tells Nicholas that he will give him fifty thousand francs when Bridget has a child. Charlotte's five beautiful children are weak in the legs, but they are "the joy of existence" nonetheless. One's duty is to procreate for the family, however maimed the lives may be.

Bridget, caught in a whirling undercurrent of love and hatred and family intrigue, begins first to fear and then to despise these strangers as she realizes the ignoble motives back of all the family devotion. She sees her husband gradually growing hostile to her as he identifies her with his family, no longer with himself. She is confirmed in her instinctive distrust of situations and feelings sanctified by the rubber stamps of time and custom; she defends herself by mockery and the mental reservation against the blind cruelties and wrongs which are

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done under cover of love. Luc complicates matters by falling in love with her instead of asking for one of the sisters, but even so he does not speak until it is too late—until it is safe for him to speak, when marriage to one of the sisters is no longer the best investment he can make. And Bridget, who has wavered, been pulled almost to pieces by the tearing, gnawing, secretive antagonisms and separate aims of the family, comes to her conclusion—a rather bitter one, which in the end will solve very badly the problem. Of her own will she takes to herself the seed of decay.

This is no more than a bare and disfiguring outline of the plan of the novel. The whole manner of the telling is superb: there are long passages of prose which crackle and snap with electric energy, episodes in which inner drama and outward events occur against scenes bright with the vividness of things seen by the immediate eye: the bathing party on the beach, the fire in the village, the delicious all-day excursion to Castle Island, the scene in the market when Bridget and Nicholas quarrel, the death of Charlotte, the funeral. Nothing is misplaced or exaggerated, and the masterful use of symbol and allegory clarify and motivate the main great theme beneath the apparent one: the losing battle of youth and strength against the resistless army of age and death. This concept is implicit in the story itself, and it runs like music between the lines. The book is a magnificent performance; and as the short stories left the impression of reservoirs of power hardly tapped, so this novel, complete as it is, seems only a beginning.

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Revolution, the Woman, and the Word: Kay Boyle

Suzanne Clark

Modernist experiments with language have an especially problematic relationship to women's writing which is experimental. Kay Boyle's early work puts the old categories into motion and marks out a new literary space of intense descriptive prose. Yet her impact on literary history has not seemed so powerful as her writing would warrant. In 1929, Kay Boyle signed a manifesto for *transition* calling for "The Revolution of the Word."[1] Other signers included Hart Crane, Harry and Caresse Crosby, and Eugene Jolas. The "Proclamation" asserted, among other things, that "The literary creator has the right to disintegrate the primal matter of words" and that "We are not concerned with the propagation of sociological ideas except to emancipate the creative elements from the present ideology."

Boyle's rewriting of the new word was a different matter from the poetics of someone like Hart Crane, a difference she in fact had signaled herself in a critique of his obsession with the primacy of words, in "Mr. Crane and His Grandmother."[2] Nevertheless, though she prefers the American renewals of Williams and Moore, Boyle shows herself to be in the tradition of Baudelaire and Rimbaud as well. Her innovations in prose style qualify Kay Boyle as a revolutionary of lyric language.[3] In her early works, such as "Episode in the Life of an Ancestor," "Wedding Day," or "On the Run," she swerves her narratives into a language of illumination and intensity that disorders story sequence and the familiar forms of remembering. She experiments in a way that recalls the hallucinatory surrealism of Rimbaud's prose and fulfills the aspiration of the poetic revolution for what the *transition* manifesto calls "the projection of a metamorphosis of reality."

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But what does this powerful disintegration of conventional writing have to do with writing as a woman? The strong old forms of the sentimental novel were part of what modernist poetics rejected. And yet, for the modernists, the cultural image of women and writing was deeply involved with that past. A shattering of language seemed to be at odds with writing like a woman. Women writers, too, felt they had to separate themselves from that conventional past. Boyle herself has taken pains to disassociate her work from the older tradition of women's writing as well as from the politics of feminism. Nevertheless, Kay Boyle's reworking of the relationship between time and place, narration and description, may also make the connection between the time of poetic revolution and the place of the woman.

Julia Kristeva, another woman who has complicated relationships with revolution and women's writing, may help us to see the problem. In her essay, "Women's Time," Kristeva redefined Nietzsche's idea of monumental or mythic time, a kind of temporality that is left out of rational discursive history.[4] Kristeva defines "women's time" as "repetition" and "eternity," in contrast with the linear movements of history. Women's time is characterized by

> the eternal recurrence of a biological rhythm which conforms to that of nature and imposes a temporality whose stereotyping may shock, but whose regularity and unison with what is experienced as extrasubjective time, cosmic time, occasion vertiginous visions and unnameable *jouissance*.[5]

If the order of production defines the time of history, it is the order of reproduction which seems to define this other kind of time, time which is so bound to the monumental, and the regional, that it is almost a kind of space. The cyclic and monumental forms of time associated with female subjectivity are far from the linear times of progress and project. But we must proceed very carefully, with Kristeva as with Kay Boyle, for it would be very wrong to suggest that either of them advocated a splitting away of a woman's order from human history.

Boyle's early work practices a resistance to extremism in the midst of a modernist extremism about gender. Modernism as it appeared in the 1920s featured an ideological either/or which would either deny the existence of gender difference in the name of equality or, in a move which Catharine Stimpson calls the "modern counterreformation in support of patriarchal law," claim gender difference, as D. H. Lawrence does, for example, to be the final truth.[6]

If Boyle refuses to write polemically, in behalf of an alternative women's reality, she also refuses to omit gendered, female elements

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from her writing. Working within a culture of gendered extremism, she softly moves to put the contradictions into motion. The word "soft" has a certain significance; in an age which favored the tough over the tender, Boyle uses it so frequently it is almost a stylistic marker. A certain radical fluidity characterizes the forward movement of her narration. She makes visible the movement of what is left unspoken by the controlling enigmas of realism. So the luminous otherness of her work might well pass unremarked, since it is "soft," since it is neither an embrace nor a refusal of modernism's radical gendered Other. Boyle's work resists certain categories, traps of ideology, and this includes the categorical oppositions of male and female.

Kay Boyle's work might be thought of as revolutionary, then, not only because of the shattering of syntax which connects her experimental writing to the *avant-garde*. She makes the metaphorical connection between individuals, across difference. Her writing subverts the male plot, linear time, by a recursive, anaphoric temporality. And perceptions flow with the voice of the speaker across the boundaries of subject-object, rewriting the Romantic identifications with exterior images which Ruskin criticized as the "pathetic fallacy." Kay Boyle uses the fluidity of poetic forms to wash out the one-track temporality of male discourse and to undermine the singularity of gender ideology by a multiple sympathy. She unsettles the stabilities of identity. Time enters the problematic of space. Women's time enters into history, making it less singular, undoing its regularities.

Three of her early stories will serve as examples of how Kay Boyle's writing might participate in such a project.[7] What kind of narrative time is operating, for example, in the story called "Episode in the Life of an Ancestor"? What kind of story is an "episode"? Is it singular or plural? A kind of turning point, or a repeated event?

In the story, a young woman defies her father's conventional desires for her to act like a submissive woman. The masterful way she treats their horses is like the mastery she exercises over her father and would-be suitor, the schoolmaster. But the conflict between the father and daughter is framed by the long view of history. This is the story of an ancestor, of a grandmother as a young woman. The whole shimmers ambiguously between the backward long vision of memory and the immediacy of a present moment: "But at a time when the Indian fires made a wall that blossomed and withered at night on three sides of the sky, this grandmother was known as one of the best horsewomen in Kansas" (17–18).

The point of view also shifts to produce discontinuities in the linear

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structure of the plot. It is her father's egoistic will to dominate which provides the conflict in the story: "Her father was proud of the feminine ways there were in her. . . . It was no pride to him to hear [her voice] turned hard and thin in her mouth to quiet a horse's ears when some fright had set them to fluttering on the beak of its head" (17). The daughter/grandmother, however, is not drawn into the conflict. Her perceptions involve the repeated, habitual, physical world and her mode is exclamatory, even joyful: "What a feast of splatters when she would come out from a long time in the kitchen and walk in upon the beasts who were stamping and sick with impatience for her in the barn" (19). From the daughter's point of view, sympathy is a strong recognition of difference, and her "way with horses" is mastery without egotism. Her point of view flows into the animal sensations of the horse:

> This was tame idle sport, suited to ladies, this romping in the milkweed cotton across the miles of pie-crust. Suddenly he felt this anger in the grandmother's knees that caught and swung him about in the wind. Without any regard for him at all, so that he was in a quiver of admiration and love for her, she jerked him up and back, rearing his wild head high, his front hoofs left clawing at the space that yapped under them. (23)

The wildness of the horse seems to represent some kind of primeval vigor and sexuality that might remind us of D. H. Lawrence. It is, however, an energy both shared and directed by the woman. Against this energy, the father's will appears as unreal imaginings: he longs for "the streams of gentleness and love that cooled the blood of true women" (18). He doesn't know what is going on inside her or outside her. As he sees it, she goes off into the unknown for her ride into a night "black as a pocket." The ironic folds in the fabric of their relationship turn about the schoolmaster, a "quiet enough thought" by comparison to the woman and the horses until the father imagines him in the sexualized landscape of her midnight ride. Then his rage produces a paranoid close-up of the schoolmaster's face in his mind's eye—the detail of hairs and pores—in a failure of sympathy which wildly reverses itself again at the end with his unspoken cry: "What have you done with the schoolmaster?" (24). The father's fantasies are chairbound and disconnected from life. In the end, he cannot even put them into words.

The grandmother has hot blood, a heat that spreads and permeates the vocabulary of the story in a membranous action. The women is woven into the fabric of the moment as she is into the words of the text, part of the whole cloth of experience. This displacement of human

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energy into the surrounding objects of perception makes the descriptions seem luminous, surreal—not imaginary, but strongly imagined. The grandmother's intensity spreads into the landscape with its contrasts of soft and hard, white and red, domestic flax and wild fire: "soft white flowering goldenrod," "Indian fires burning hard and bright as peonies" (20). The deep valleys and gulfs and the blossoming prairies form a topology of pocketing and hollows. The father registers how the daughter is a very figure of thereness: "When she came into the room she was there in front of him in the same way that the roses on the floor were woven straight across the rug" (23). He, on the other hand, is the very figure of absence, speechless, longing nostalgically for some one "of his own time to talk to" (23). On the recommendation, apparently, of the schoolmaster, the woman has been reading the creation of Eve passage from *Paradise Lost*. Milton's lines expose Boyle's poetic figure, the mutuality of flesh and landscape and the spousal emotion. But this revelation of poetic influence offends the father, perhaps as much as the sexuality implied in the passage.

Like Milton, her father takes an accusatory stance toward the woman's sexuality. However, the daughter's refusal to be feminine his way, "the cooking and the sewing ways that would be a comfort to him" (20), undoes his ego-centered plot, an undoing which opens possibilities for the woman to be heroic in more multiple ways. Instead of a single hero dominating a single plot in time, Boyle produces the double figure of the daughter/grandmother and a narrative which circles through episode to a life time. Instead of a hero who would make the woman over in his own image, she produces a heroine who moves through mastery—of the horses, the schoolmaster, even her father—to a sympathy which is not identification with a male voice. The story is contained by long-distance temporality, as if written on a tapestry, a legendary mode which mimics the male heroic modes only to name them "episode." Female desire reshapes the forms of narrative as well as the forms of description: the woman is a hero who changes the forms of the heroic.

But in "Wedding Day," Kay Boyle does not shrink from showing us female power of a less attractive kind, allied with the bourgeois projects of family and possessions, and the literary mode of "realistic" representation. In this story, it is the mother who works to dominate, through organizing the details of the wedding day which will initiate her all too energetic children, the too loving brother and sister, into the empty exchanges of proper social relations. The wedding will initiate them into culture—and separate them. It is the mother who makes the

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violent cut that institutes order—as if she were founding the very system of culture by preventing the incest of brother and sister—but the gesture is also absurd and grotesque. So it finds its image in the "roast of beef" that "made them kin again" as "she sliced the thin scarlet ribbons of it onto the platter" (26). Not that the mother has, exactly, forced this marriage—she says it was not her idea, and her son defends his sister's choice—whose choice it was is confused. The issue is more primitive; the mother's negativity is on the side of the cut, the ceremonial structure, against any outbursts of trouble or love. She opposes her son with a prayer for "dignity," but, returning from a last excursion together, they find her on her knees tying "white satin bows under the chins of the potted plants" (28).

She must maintain the objects of family life as intact mirrors—so it is that she counts the wedding "a real success, . . . a *real* success" when "no glass had yet been broken." Of course, it is the bride at the wedding who is "broken," but that happens beyond the precincts of the "real" which the mother so carefully maintains. Thus, from the point of view of the mother, the story has a happy ending; if she were the author of it, the incestuous energy of the brother and sister's love would be repressed.

Just as the brother and sister threaten the social order and its objects with their desire, the descriptive intensity of Boyle's style violates the decorum of the ceremony with a contradiction and violence that threatens to flood out the containing devices of concrete objects. What are these images doing at a wedding? The red carpet was to "spurt like a hemorrhage." "No one paid any attention" to the wedding cake, "with its beard lying white as hoar frost on its bosom" (24–25). What is this negativity? There is the "thunderous NO" of the mother, who refuses to give the copper pans to her daughter as the spirit of a family inheritance might suggest. The mother must keep the pans orderly and unused, the "pride of the kitchen," "six bulls-eyes reflecting her thin face" (25). She wishes, indeed, for the orderly household objects to serve as mirrors for the son and daughter as well, representations of the selves she would have them take on.

The young people challenge the civilizing project. These two are Nietzschean creatures, with "yellow manes," "shaggy as lions," "like another race." Like a refrain, the brother keeps repeating, "It isn't too late." But what else might they do except enter into the schemes laid out for them? Something, this story suggests, as it exceeds and overwhelms the bourgeois "real" of the mother: "in their young days they should have been saddled and strapped with necessity so that they could not

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have escaped. . . . With their yellow heads back they were stamping a new trail, but in such ignorance, for they had no idea of it" (27).

The necessity of youth, of freedom, of a new race encounters the violence of April, like Eliot's April the "cruelest month," bringing the death, here, of childhood. "Here then was April holding them up, stabbing their hearts with hawthorne, scalping them with a flexible blade of wind" (26). "Over them was the sky set like a tomb, the strange unearthly sky that might at any moment crack into spring" (28). The brother and sister take a ride in a boat together. If the boat ride were solitary, it would be an easy allegory; the wedding would represent the shackling of the poetic spirit. However, they are two; what is between them we are less likely to see as a visitation of the romantic Imagination than as incestuous desire. Neither they nor we know if they should act on what they feel. "And who was there to tell them, for the trees they had come to in the woods gave them no sign" (27).

The signs of the story produce not a judgment about how the plot should have gone, but a negativity that opens up the forms of the wedding and the story to something else, something which like the sister and brother does not wholly fit in the bourgeois "real," something full of energy, destructive and exuberant. At the end the daughter's "feet were fleeing in a hundred ways throughout the rooms, . . . like white butterflies escaping by a miracle the destructive feet of whatever partner held her in his arms" (29). The wedding, far from locking her exclusively to one person, has propelled her into an anonymity of social exchange. The brother's antagonism scatters the calling cards around the rooms. An exotic, almost romantic energy inhabits the mother's performance as she dances, undermining her decorum, and destroying the very syntax of the sentence: "Over the Oriental prayer rugs, through the Persian forests of hemp, away and away" (30).

In "Wedding Day," Boyle reveals the hidden violence of the social contract and releases the energy of exposure to work on the forms of language itself. At the same time, she does not wholly cast the mother as executioner, the daughter as victim. Rather, she exposes the sacrificial violence of the wedding itself, and the relentless secularity of its bourgeois forms. Boyle resists a "women's writing" which would trap her in an oppositional category identified with the bourgeoisie; she neither endorses nor combats but rather eludes capture in the mother's forms.

Boyle's elusiveness produces an unsettling. She is always in favor of something which illuminates the landscape with significance—call it love—something which bends the narrative plot away from its

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resolutions, which turns the eye inescapably to the detail, apparently decorative, but now repeating anaphorically the interestedness of the subject who writes. These are not stories about isolated selves, but about the mutual imbrications of relationships among people, and so they do not disguise the complexity of perspectives which our feelings for each other are likely to generate.

Even a story as purely focused as "On the Run" shows the contrary motions of resolution coming up against one another and that language of significance breaking closures, keeping the time itself open. The situation is close to biography: two lovers, like Kay Boyle herself with Ernest Walsh, are wandering across the south of Europe, unable to find a place for the sick man to rest—thrown out of hotels because he is dying. In "On the Run," memory is left permeable—fragile, undecided, unpunctuated, determined only by the universal timelessness of death that thus seems everywhere. David Daiches says that Boyle's stories are like parables, with "a special kind of permanence" about them.[8] In our culture, this sense of permanence may be identified with women's time, appearing as a contrary narrative that works across the linear, historical plot. This is especially visible in "On the Run," where the history is known, and the story exists nevertheless not in a past, but in a recurring present, like a parable.

The young couple must deal with a woman who orders them to leave rather than helping them. It is not just a person, but social convention itself which opposes them. The proprietress of the hotel is, in fact, in mourning. She seems to know all about the conventions of death:

> Bereaved in the full sallow of her cheeks bereaved and the tombstones rising politely polished with discreet sorrow bereaved and remembered with bubbles of jet frosted on her bosoms and mourned under waves of hemmed watered crepe. I have mourned people for years and years this is the way it is done. (105)

She seems also to possess a kind of knowledge about religious conventions of sacrifice: there was her "rosary hanging like false teeth," and "the Christ bled with artistry" on her crucifix. But her knowledge has all been projected onto the objects, reduced and transformed to fetishes. So what she says is: "Your husband cannot die here, . . . we are not prepared for death" (106). Here is the terrible irony, that the sick man must keep on going. Like the mother in "Wedding Day," the proprietress does not seem to know what women are supposed to hold in custody: the value of relationship, the cycles of time, of the

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generations, of biological time. And like the mother, she has translated all of it into the social symbolic.

Thus women's time must return through the narrative of the story. Boyle's writing stops the forward pressing of historical time, like the train stopped at "Saint-André-les-Alpes," and sidetracks it into sensuous, loaded detail:

> As the train stopped a soft pink tide of pigs rose out of the station-yard and ran in under the wheels of the wagon. The crest of little alps was burning across the roofs of the town, with the dry crumbling finger of the church lifted and the sky gaping white and hot upon decay. (103)

She strips the sick man's words of their history to let them fly out as if prophetic, repeated, stripping them even of punctuation:

> Get her out of here he said I am going to cough Christ is this where the death will get me take the cigaret and when I cough walk around the room and sing or something so they won't hear me (104)

There is no period after his words.

The conflict with the proprietress does not appear as a single plot with a conclusion, but as the anaphoric structure of enduring betrayal. The message of betrayal is repeated three times, each introduced by the phrase "The bonne came back to say." It is a sacramental structure. At the end, too, the man's words are stripped of punctuation so that they seem to escape from the symbolic conventions of the story and sound in the mind like stream-of-consciousness, recurring. This is *anamnesis*, a resurrection of the past and not just memory: "Keep on keep on keep on he said maybe I'm going to bleed" (107). Such a resurrection takes place in the process of a narrative dialectic between the linear time of history that is past and the personal time of remembrance, anamnesis. Anamnesis is the form of recollection which Plato associated with eros—and with access to eternal truth. It is the word for the "remembrance" of Christian communion. And it is the unforgetting of the past which Freud advocated, the healing reliving of pain which psychoanalysis could effect. This time which Boyle produces is associated, as well, with what Julia Kristeva calls "women's time."

This resurrection—and not just recollection—of a moment of pain and love inserts difference into the history. The position of difference which we may associate with women's time here is different from the polarized opposition which some of Boyle's characters, like the mother and the proprietress, seem to inhabit. This alternate version of narrative, with its descriptive intensity overwhelming the forward

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movement of plot, opens language up to the surreal, the hallucinatory. Narrative time gives way to descriptive space.

The energy is not in the story, or the forward movement of plot, but rather in the metaphorical connections among people and place—in relationship. Even though these connections shift and develop through time, so that it looks as though there is an elaboration of plot, the motive force of story is not erotic in the masculine mode. That is, the displacement of desire does not take the form of an adventure. The energy here is moral, even if the situations are unconventional.

And this is true not only for Boyle's early experimental stories, where condensation and stream of consciousness make the form private, intense, and lyrical. As the descriptive and metaphorical qualities of discourse appear in more and more public formulations, from the autobiographical novel, *Year Before Last,* to a best-seller like *Avalanche,* they support more complex and yet more familiar forms of relationship.

Let us look a little closer at this descriptive language which so many of Kay Boyle's readers have noted—which Margaret Atwood cites as one of her most striking attributes.[9] Sandra Whipple Spanier associates it on the one hand with a Joycean project and on the other with the romantic perspective in Boyle: she "depicts the external world as a reflection or projection of the perceiver's consciousness."[10] Like Joyce, Boyle writes a "lyric" novel, which decenters the lyric subjectivity, the image of an ego. Boyle opens language to the pressure of the unspeakable; her words are saturated with the residues of what cannot be said, but can be mutually felt. In doing this, she changes the way we might think about the so-called "pathetic fallacy."

Boyle rewrites the romantic reflexivity, shattering the mirror relationship of self and nature under the pressure of a point of view that flows everywhere and comes from no single or stationary ego, or subjectivity. In this, she eludes the very categories of romantic, unified selfhood, of the "true and false appearances" with which Ruskin had thought through his influential critique of the "pathetic fallacy."[11] Ruskin, let us recall, had argued that it is "only the second order of poets" who delight in the kind of description produced by violent feeling, a "falseness in all our impressions of external things" which "fancies a life" in foam or leaf instead of maintaining distinctions. Ruskin's "great poet" masters feeling:

> But it is still a grander condition when the intellect also rises, till it is strong enough to assert its rule against, or together with, the utmost efforts of the passions; and the whole man stands in an

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> iron glow, white hot, perhaps, but still strong, and in no wise evaporating; even if he melts, losing none of his weight.[12]

This nineteenth-century vision of the strong ego, the whole man, the rational individual has retained its heavy influence in twentieth-century criticism, visible in the work of critics like John Crowe Ransom and Yvor Winters, and visible in the great fear of the "sentimental" which permeates criticism.

Kay Boyle's practice, like Joyce's, breaks open this paranoid logic of the subject. In the place of individual heroic figures, she has the multiple connections of relationships; against the center of a linear plot she brings a counter narrative to bear. Words do not simply mirror subjects; the luminosity of her language tracks the energy of a freed desire to make connections. Hers is the logic of a poetic revolution which makes room for the woman, as for others. In this it is not simply experimental, and indeed, the chief characteristics I have observed here are to be found, in slightly different forms, in her later, apparently more conventional work.

Kay Boyle works to rewrite the extreme logic which erases woman from the place of the subject or installs her as the singular Other of male discourse. Hers is instead a lyric refiguring of the story which produces more multiple possibilities. It might simply be called the logic of sympathy.

Whether or not a writing which practices this kind of revolution may be powerful enough to work larger changes in literary culture remains, however, an open question. This is a writer who offers us the possibility of an artistic practice which exceeds the limits of gendered identity, which can say things that could not be said otherwise. As her readers, it is up to us now to find ways to speak about Kay Boyle's words and the revolution of the woman.

[1] For an account, see Sandra Whipple Spanier, *Kay Boyle: Artist and Activist* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1986), pp. 25–26.

[2] This essay may be found in Kay Boyle, *Words that Must Somehow Be Said*, ed. Elizabeth S. Bell (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1985), pp. 31–34.

[3] For a convincing discussion of Kay Boyle's experimental writing, her collection of stories in *Wedding Day and Other Stories*, and her contribution to the "Revolution of the Word," see Spanier, pp. 30–56.

[4] This essay, published originally in French as "Le Temps des femmes," in *33/44: Cahiers de recherche des sciences des textes et documents*, No. 5 (Winter 1979), first appeared in English translated by Alice Jardine and Harry Blake, in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 7 (1981), and has been reprinted a

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number of times. My references are to the text in *The Kristeva Reader,* ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1984), pp. 187–213.

[5] "Women's Time," p. 191.

[6] "Stein and the Transposition of Gender," *The Poetics of Gender,* Nancy Miller, ed. (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1984), p. 2.

[7] These three stories first appeared in the collection called *Wedding Day and Other Stories* (New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith, 1930). References to "On the Run" are to this edition. "Episode in the Life of an Ancestor" and "Wedding Day" have been reprinted in *Fifty Stories* (New York: Penguin Books, 1981). For the convenience of readers, references to these two stories are to this later edition.

[8] In the "Introduction" to Kay Boyle, *Fifty Stories.*

[9] See Atwood's "Introduction" to Kay Boyle's *Three Short Novels* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), p. ix.

[10] *Kay Boyle,* p. 36.

[11] See John Ruskin, "Of the Pathetic Fallacy," in *Critical Theory Since Plato,* ed. Hazard Adams (New York: Harcourt, 1971).

[12] "Pathetic Fallacy," p. 619.

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My Next Bride: Kay Boyle's Text of the Female Artist

Deborah Denenholz Morse

Kay Boyle's novel, *My Next Bride* (1934), concerns the moral development of its heroine, Victoria John, a young American artist who travels to Thirties Paris in search of Experience and Art, in retreat from American philistinism. The novel is thinly disguised autobiography. It details Boyle's own Left Bank experiences in Twenties Paris, experiences she recalled in the 1968 version of Robert McAlmon's 1938 memoirs, *Being Geniuses Together,* which Boyle edited, and in which chapters of her own recollections alternate with McAlmon's reminiscences. It is in this context that *My Next Bride* has received the contemporary critical appreciation of Boyle scholars like Sandra Spanier (Boyle's biographer) and writers such as Doris Grumbach, the author of the Afterword to the newly reissued Virago edition of the book.

While this historical and biographical context of Boyle's writings is central to an evaluation of the significance of her work, another important context for consideration of *My Next Bride* is as a female version of the *Künstlerroman*, the story of the artist's youthful apprenticeship. James Joyce, one of Boyle's companion expatriates in Paris, had written in 1916 what was to become the most famous modern *Künstlerroman* in the English language, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* eighteen years before Boyle wrote her novel. In Joyce's book, Stephen Dedalus escaped the "nets" of Family, Church, and State to become a writer.

Many of the important portraits of the artist as a young woman that followed Joyce's book tell stories in which the heroine's need to be free of patriarchal dictates for women overshadows Stephen's need to escape

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institutional authority in order to create. The most galling confinement for the female artist, as defined by these texts, is the prison of gender. For example, two other books about a female artist written by British authors at precisely the same time as the American Boyle wrote *My Next Bride* are Antonia White's *Frost in May* (1933) and Vita Sackville-West's *All Passion Spent* (1931), novels that clearly illustrate this distinction between the male and female artist plot. The novels offer overtly contrasting versions of the female artist plot that in fact are informed by a similar feminist ideology. White's book, a portrait of the artist as a young girl, traces the evolution of the artist's rebellious consciousness in Nanda Grey, as she comes of age in the conventional world of a Catholic girls' school. In contrast, Sackville-West's novel begins when Lady Slane is eighty-eight, just after the death of her husband. The rest of the book is concerned with the heroine's memories of her youthful aspirations to be a painter, and hence includes long sections which paint a portrait of the artist as a young girl. The book details the constriction of Lady Slane's private, artistic self by her marriage to a very public man, a man who becomes first Viceroy of India and then Prime Minister of England. The feminist ideology underlying both texts emphasizes the repression of the female artist by cultural expectations of womanhood, and the necessity of rebellion against those expectations in order to forge the identity of the female artist.

Boyle's vision of the nature of the female artist's rebellion as a liberation from masculinist values is akin to that embodied in other female artist plots. Her portrayal of the means of enacting that rebellion in order to create art—like White's and Sackville-West's—thus is radically different than Joyce's in *Portrait*. Stephen Dedalus, Joyce's artist-hero, always feels isolated and alienated, and moves toward his expatriation from Ireland in order "to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (252–53).[1] Victoria John, Boyle's artist-heroine, begins her experience in expatriation from America, and moves toward community rather than isolation, toward engagement rather than alienation. In her exploration of Victoria's moral development, Boyle opposes her sense of the female artistic vision as necessarily grounded in social concerns to Joyce's embodiment of the male artistic vision as private, unique, and necessarily isolated.

Like other stories of the female artist's formative years, Boyle's novel focuses on the protagonist's realization of how society limits her sex, but her portrait of Victoria John's accretive self-knowledge is much less overtly polemical than many texts of the female artist: Sackville-

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West's or White's, for instance. It is only when two formal structures of *My Next Bride* are foregrounded that one can perceive that the subtext of this female *Künstlerroman* is a critique not only of male cultural values, but also of the early Joycean vision of the artist as separate from community, necessarily divided from political concerns. The first of these formal structures is the tripartite division of *My Next Bride*, a division that marks the stages of Victoria's artistic apprenticeship. The second is the prominence of metaphors of ravishment and nurturance, metaphors that suggest Boyle's awareness of feminist concerns and her sense of a male/female cultural opposition. The import of Boyle's novel, and the cultural lessons that Victoria John learns, lead both the reader and Victoria to see the artist's vision—and her mission—as political. Boyle ultimately prophesies a new role *within* society for the artist.

In Victoria's story, her progress to emotional and artistic maturity is marked by three stages, each of which is represented by a section of the book titled with the name of the figure who most influences Victoria at that point in her development. Each of these figures is also an artist, and is thus identified with Victoria, serving both as mentor and as the embodiment of an alternative experience for her. The first, Sorrel, is the *avant-garde* patriarch of a Left Bank commune in its demise. Victoria's willingness to serve Sorrel, whose ideology of the Rousseauistic natural man obscures his true moral corruption, marks the first stage of her development, in which she is willing to play female muse to the male artist. Based on Boyle's real-life experiences in 1928 in Raymond Duncan's colony at Neuilly, the depiction of Sorrel's ravages on his people indicts Duncan's immoral artistic vision, which vindicates the abuse of others for the glory of the male artist.

Sorrel's colony is a cooperative, happy community only in theory; in reality it is an autocracy that oversees exploitation of its less favored or weak members—including its children. Sorrel's commune once prospered under the auspices of his wife, the dancer Ida (based on Isadora Duncan); however, it has become decadent under Sorrel, whose own egotism coupled with the rule of his sensual wife Mathilde—controller of the colony's pursestrings—has brought spiritual and material ruin. Ida's former beneficent influence is indicated by a passage in which Victoria looks at a photograph of her that is inscribed "I would teach the whole world to dance," and thinks of the change that has come to the colony:

> Whatever they were, they had been that thing together, and when she was dead it left room for the other thing to come: the cobwebs across the corners, and the dishes piled up in their filth

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> and waste in the kitchens; the cold slipping ice—white under the doors, marching strong as an army through the windows to the flesh and bone and marrow that survived in squalor there. (68)[2]

The image of Ida, posed "tall and lovely," and the declaration of the photograph's caption express her desire to nurture the world with her art. Against this image, Boyle juxtaposes a metaphorical "army" that ravishes the colony's inmates, invading the "flesh and bone and marrow that survived in squalor there" (68).

Victoria's realization of Sorrel's debased sense of values, demonstrated most painfully in his treatment of the commune's starving, ignored children, leads to her rejection of him and to her continued search for a more humane vision and a true community in which there is congruence between theory and practice. Instead of finding identity and purpose in the serene, natural communal life that well-heeled tourists come to revere, Victoria uncovers the greed and love of comfort behind Sorrel's rhetoric of the austere and the "natural." She finds him unwilling to accept moral responsibility even for his smallest acts of selfishness—implicitly asking permission to use communal money for treats, like a child, while the real children of the commune starve, eating "winter carrots and stewed turnips, cooked fast so that their hearts were hard and done to death in flour in the cold" (229).

Victoria's longing to believe in Sorrel as spiritual and artistic mentor leads her into complicity with the hypocrisy of his colony. As she tells Antony Lister (the wealthy, sensitive American expatriate who will be her second mentor), "Like any woman, I belong to the thing I have undertaken" (187). This longing, and her physical hunger, allow her to take Estelle's dish of ratatouille and "the hearts of things cooked delicate as a Chinese dish" (236) in the face of the children's starvation; the same desire to believe in Sorrel impels the myth of the harmonious colony that she weaves for the wealthy American customer, Mrs. Brookbank, in hopes of getting her money for Sorrel.

In Boyle's view, Sorrel's colony becomes a metaphor of the ravishment of both the body and the spirit. Many things impose the truth about Sorrel's moral bankruptcy on Victoria, even before the final "exposure" scene in which she stands by while Peri, a colony member abused for years by Sorrel, rises up to accuse his oppressor after Sorrel spends Mrs. Brookbank's money not on a printing press, but on a fancy American car. The most important of these revelations is her love for Antony, and his relentless search for identity and intense passion for the poetic vision of D. H. Lawrence, of Emily Dickinson.

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Unlike the egocentric Sorrel, Antony loves other people. As he tells Victoria about life with Fontana, "We like people more than anything else in life" (102). When Victoria speaks of her painting, Antony is so intent that "whatever he was was lost at once in the wonder for the thing somebody else might be" (102).

Victoria's experiences with the colony's children crystallize her discontent with Sorel and force her to see the evil consequences of his hypocrisy. In one devastating scene, Victoria takes the children to a park for the first time in their lives. These children, who bear classical names like Hippolytus and Prosperine, have in truth no connection to Nature and are terrified of grass. Clad in togas like ancient Greek children—in accordance with Sorrel's aesthetic—the children are totally uncared for. One child, Bishinka, is in pain because, as Boyle's narrator ironically comments, the "ties on his sandals had been badly sewn" (267). Moreover, his "toenails had not been cut, had never been cut perhaps, and they were growing inward like great yellow sabres" (267). The children are described as "four little overtures to death, their feet whispering over the mosses an invitation to the grave" (268). In reaction to their plight, Victoria creates a story for them of the promised land, but the children in this colony supposedly dedicated to the creation of art are in truth so deprived that they have diminished imaginations; the sound of the story "was unfamiliar: they could not recognize their own faces unless they were Hippolytus, Athenia, Prosperine and Bishinka waiting in the common room for supper or lying down at night to sleep upon the floor" (269).

The next stage of Victoria's apprenticeship leads her to Antony, with whom she has a romantic, unconsummated love affair. Antony (based on the real-life Harry Crosby)[3] is a failed artist who has nearly given up his own painting; significantly, he offers his paints to Victoria. He also offers love and money—patronage—to her. Most importantly, Antony talks constantly of his wife, the sculptor Fontana—of their love of poetry and art; it is this talk, which brings Fontana (Caresse Crosby, to whom *My Next Bride* is dedicated) and Victoria together, that is his greatest legacy to both of these women. Although Antony is thus a mentor to Victoria, his vision is warped by his upbringing, which has been ruled by the values of the patriarchy. His father, Horace, insists that he quit painting, and reviles him for living on his wife's money while he pursues his art—although Fontana supports this unconventional situation. Significantly, it is only when Antony is alone with Fontana that he paints, while she sculpts. Together, they scrawl the words of D. H. Lawrence on the walls leading to their country house.

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But the conflicting claims of the materialistic patriarchy and of his own attraction to the spiritually redemptive beauty of art generate a destructive tension in Antony, an identity crisis that is ultimately consummated in suicide. As he writes to Fontana, in a letter she reads to Victoria:

> "I am not" said the cable in Fontana's voice "gold, silver or copper, I am something waiting to be set to music . . . Mozart forgot me in his eighth year . . . hummed me over between Don Juan and the Magic Flute and forgot me going upstairs to bed in Salzburg . . . Anaconda Copper, Carro de Pasco, Seaboard Oil are passwords for departure . . . New York explodes inside me every time I step out the door . . . I can't do it . . . I can't do it . . . I can't do it." (287–88)

The self-destructive Antony cannot serve as a model artist for Victoria, although his kindness and true sense of questing mark a stage along the path of Victoria's apprenticeship. Unlike the egomaniacal Sorrel, there is no hypocrisy in Antony. Sorrel sees his hypothetical printing press—so easily abandoned for a shiny new car—as a vehicle to glorify himself, but when Antony tells Victoria that he wants "to print a book on the virgin passions of the soul" (135), he wants to glorify human nature. However, although Antony states that "I believe in the word now and in the transformations it can make" (135), he does not act upon a sense of social purpose other than the demands of his father and of American society that he make money. Antony's financial failure might logically issue in despair and suicide, since his losses on the stock market devalue him by the standards of patriarchal culture. While in her Afterword to the novel Doris Grumbach has called Antony's suicide "curious, melodramatic, almost unaccountable" (328), his choice to end his life might be traced to his futile efforts to be both himself and, as Fontana phrases it, "a good son to Horace" (288). Unable to find a role in which he remains comfortable, as he tells Victoria, "I saw there was no place anywhere that wrapped me close and held me fast for ever" (211). In any event, the real-life basis of this episode—the double suicide of Harry Crosby and his mistress—is surely just as inexplicable, just as strange.[4] Antony's suicide tragically fulfills the novel's epigraph, the declaration by Laurence Vail (Boyle's second husband) that "knife will be my next bride," the source of the book's enigmatic title.[5]

Nowhere in *My Next Bride* is Antony's crisis of identity and purpose more vividly illustrated than in the brilliant scene in which a poor street violinist refuses to take Antony's suit as a gift. Here, Boyle sets up a visual opposition between the most impoverished of art's practitioners

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and Antony: Antony tries to assume the identity of a poor worker, in his corduroys and labouring jacket, while the violinist will not take on the identity of a wealthy businessman, embodied in Antony's suit. The image of Antony's discarded suit, stretched "long and empty across the pieces of thin white ice that roofed the cobbles in the gutter, the loose limbs of it curved in weariness and the arms fallen open, the white shirt laid in at the neck, the jacket buttons buttoned, as if the man who wore it had lain down there and wasted to nothingness within," is eerily prophetic of Antony's suicide, the end of his assertion to Victoria that "one cannot be nothing" (210).

In his search for identity in relation to other human beings, Antony shares with Victoria and Fontana a longing to find social and spiritual values that will take precedence over material concerns. The reckless generosity with which Antony stuffs a great amount of money in Victoria's purse when he takes her home from a wild party, for instance, contrasts with the stingy grasping after money of Sorrel and Mathilde. The progress of this money through Victoria to the ones who need it most—the starving Russian noblewomen—serves as a kind of metaphor of the socialist beliefs of Boyle herself. And Victoria's gift of money, of freedom, to Miss Fira and Miss Grusha—who have been virtually imprisoned in one room for fifty years—continues a pattern of nurturing toward these two impoverished women that contradicts the alienation they have experienced since the Revolution. In the following scene, the images of release from pain are metaphors of a loosening of the specifically female strictures that have bound them to their place, to their outcast fate:

> She could not say put your hands down here on my knees, little women, let me take the pins out of your hair, let me draw the bones from your lace like taking splinters from your flesh. Whatever I do, I have enough left over, enough food, drink, love, time enough, enough to touch your hands and make you go to sleep quiet. You must believe in me for I am not afraid of anything the world can do. (154–55)

It is this fearless effort toward assuaging pain that, in Boyle's view, is not only the artist's but the human being's responsibility.

Similarly, when Antony sends food to Victoria, she shares it with Miss Fira and Miss Grusha. Later, Victoria cannot enjoy her lavish meal with Antony until they send delicacies to the Russian sisters. Finally, the Archibald MacLeish quotation that Antony sends with his first gift of food to Victoria ("Ah how the throat of a girl and a girl's arms are Bright in the riding sun and the young sky And the green year of our

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lives where the willows are—" [158]) conjoins nurturance with both human love and with art.

For a time Victoria allows her frustrated love for Antony to lead her into despair, following his pattern of experiential exploration. She is led to an orgiastic party with him, but goes to bed with someone else—she's not sure who—and winds up pregnant. Antony takes her home and leaves her money—but after that she's on her own. He leaves on his ill-fated trip to America, which he had postponed in order to be with her. Victoria's life spirals into physical and moral degradation after this, until Fontana rescues her from the colony's store and takes her home with her. From here, Victoria is taken care of by Fontana, who arranges a safe abortion for her and—with immense generosity of spirit—comforts Victoria at Antony's death.

The scene in which Fontana seeks out Victoria is particularly significant because Boyle places the metaphors of ravishment and nurturance in direct opposition. While Fontana speaks to her, Victoria—who is suffering agonies from the abortion pills she is taking—begins to feel unbearable pain, pain described explicitly as a ravisher of woman's body:

> And now the wild bugles of pain were unwinding in her; they were crying high and shrill throughout her blood. They were stayless as arrogant riders, booted and spurred, riding ruthless over the country, the crops broken under as they passed and the slow quiet toil of the seasons ravaged. The elegant swordsmen had taken their swords from their scabbards and were turning them slowly in her flesh. (290)

Victoria expects the elegant Fontana to respond to her predicament with fastidious disapproval, to "pick up [her] skirts and go" (291). Instead, Fontana leads Victoria out to the filthy privy behind the colony shop (itself a metaphor of the nastiness behind Sorrel's facade of purity),[6] reassuring her: "I'll go with you . . . You might faint somewhere alone" (292). Like the poor woman "with shaking hands and warts around her nose" (283) who gives Victoria a clean handkerchief and five francs after she soils herself in public, the beautiful, rich Fontana responds to human misery with practical, unjudgmental succor.

The final stage of Victoria's apprenticeship begins with her recovery from despair under the care of Fontana. An integral part of this recovery is the inherently feminist realization that her frustrated desire to end an unwanted pregnancy safely and cheaply is a plight shared by many other women:

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> All the girls who had ever come into the place, the chambermaids from cheap hotels, and the girls from the Bon Marché and the nougat-stands in the travelling fairs, and the girls who must dance at Bobino or the Empire for a living, cheaply painted and cheaply paid; and all the others, the nameless ones *sans domicile fixe* and *sans profession*, with their heels walked sideways, like Victoria's, and their faces walked long and bony like horses' faces, all of them came forbidden and unbidden out of the darkness of the corners and gathered there around them. . . . And there must be something better than this, said Fontana drawing back from the sight of them in the place, there must be something better. . . . They were out the door, they were on the landing, and behind them in the silence of the *sage-femme's* rooms they could hear the dripping, the endless dripping of the life-blood as it left the bodies of those others; the unceasing drip of the stream as it left the wide, bare table and fell, drop by drop, to the planks beneath it, dripping and dripping on for ever like a finger tapping quickly on the floor. (302–03)

The long passage details Victoria's and Fontana's (and Boyle's) horrified reaction to the spectre of death faced by women undergoing abortion. While Stephen Dedalus's experiences lead him to affirm his own isolated, superior self, Victoria John's experiences lead her instead to an understanding of her identity with all womankind, of her body's kinship with those other female bodies. This realization of a commonality of experience is the basis of the nurturant social role Boyle envisions for the female artist. That Boyle is exploring the possibilities of this role is suggested by the fact that in *My Next Bride*, Victoria's pilgrimage to Paris is framed by the experiences of other female artists. Her inspiration as an artist comes from three women: her painting teacher, her mother, and her friend, the vaudeville performer, Mary de Lacey—who are themselves artists; she ends up in closest alliance with another female artist, the expatriate from wealthy New York society, Fontana, who is not only a devotee of literature and the arts, but is herself a talented sculptor. The book explores imagined possibilities for Victoria as artist—within Sorrel's colony, in love with Antony (who has abandoned his own painting), joined in mutual solace with Fontana after Antony's suicide.

In defining her artistic identity, Victoria learns from the experiences of these other artists, rejecting what is false (the hypocrisy of Sorrel), surviving the identity crises and the impulse to self-destruction that ended in suicide for Mary de Lacey and Antony, and ultimately being nourished by what is true—learning to have the strength of her Midwest art teacher, the conviction of her mother, and

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the commitment to beauty of Ida, Sorrel's dead wife, "a woman of poetic vision" (123). During her stay at the colony, Victoria is implicitly asked by Sorrel's sly, greedy mistress, Mathilde, to replace Ida as his muse, and while Victoria is under his influence, she paints the faces of old men, hoping that "perhaps something will happen to my own face" (77). Her developing moral awareness results in a clearer sense of identity, and her ultimate alliance is, significantly, with a sister artist, Fontana, whose words are the last of the novel, her voice "picking it up and putting it together and going on with it forever" (320). Victoria will be neither Sorrel's muse nor Antony's "next bride" (172) but, by the end of the novel, a woman who has suffered and matured, and has formed a moral vision that she will embody in her art.

This focus on the role of the female artist is especially prominent in the second chapter of the book, which opens with Victoria establishing herself in the room of a once grand Parisian home turned boardinghouse in which she has taken a room. The first thing she unpacks are three photographs, "the faces of three women separately framed" (12). The photographs are set on the chimney by Victoria and contemplated like religious icons. The first photograph is of Victoria's art teacher, a silent, reclusive woman, a "stranger" who nevertheless inspired Victoria to travel East on foot "looking for whatever there is" (20). The second photograph is of Victoria's mother, a gentle woman with a "full, loving mouth," whose artistic efforts are beginnings that Victoria wants to complete in her own life: "Everything I do you began somewhere and didn't have time to finish—dancing alone to the sound of music before strangers until I could have died of shame for you, speaking of poetry and sculpture as simply as if the colored servants loved them best" (21).

The last photograph, from a newspaper article telling of her suicide, is of the "Australian songbird," Mary de Lacey. Riding the freight cars to Montreal with Lacey, Victoria learns of female comradeship, as "they went into each other's arms for warmth, and the words were better spoken and heard while the bodies kindled each other" (220.)[7] From Lacey, who tells of her past experiences on the run from her abusive husband—three-year-old-son and ailing mother in tow—she also learns of female courage, pain, and victimization. When Lacey's mother dies, the police find cyanide pills that Lacey planned to use herself if her husband found her, and the authorities require an autopsy. The pain of having her mother's body carved up is dramatized by the horror of the corpse being fed to the sharks in the harbor—an image that confirms the prophetic vision Lacey sees in the ink of the

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palm of her hand, a picture of sharks jumping, "fighting like mad over something or other. . . ." The hungry, whirling sharks that tear a woman's body—like the image of the bleeding women's bodies at the *sage-femme's*—serve as a metaphor of ravishment defining a vision of human existence against which the female artist must create both her moral self and her art.

Later in the book, when Victoria is almost delirious with pain and weakness while taking the abortion pills, she tries to quiet the imagined voice of Antony asking "that every one put down their weapons" by reciting Lacey's tough words as "truth": "You should keep your fears for the dark, alone, like your lovers" (278–79). However, although Lacey was twice Victoria's age when they knew one another, the young American girl cannot learn sustaining wisdom from the middle-aged Australian's cynical vision, because it lacks a belief in love. When Victoria tries to express her love to the older woman—"Lacey, you're good, bad, rain, wind, thunder, sun, everything"—Lacey replies, "Where did you get it? How much does it cost a yard?" (22). Moved by a Chopin piece played by Miss Fira, Victoria tries to defend her idealism to Lacey's photograph: "And what about the thing they can't get hold of? Victoria said suddenly, jumping up in passion. What about the trees growing in spite of them, pictures getting painted, words that will be there for ever, what about it, what about love anyway, she said" (26).

As Spanier states, "In Kay Boyle's view both love of another person and love of art are essential elements of existence" (79). The commitment to another human being, that intimate social and moral relation, is necessary to the artist's larger social and moral vision, the vision that will be embodied in her art. Amid all the human wreckage of the novel, it is Fontana's love and care that will not only ensure Victoria's psychic and physical survival, but will also validate that moral vision toward which Victoria has been moving during the novel. In her generosity to Miss Fira and Miss Grusha and in her care for the colony's children, Victoria has acted upon a belief in the redemptive power of human kindness in the face of cruelty and hypocrisy.

As a measure of Victoria's progress toward this vision, Boyle creates two comparable scenes of women together, one at the beginning of her novel and one at the end. In the first scene, when Victoria and Lacey embrace in the boxcar, their intimacy is imperfect because neither woman can fully accept the other's need for nurturance. Victoria told Lacey, addressing her picture after her death, "I never said some things to you, I never said love because of the shy sound it had beside you" (22). In the closing scene of the book, Boyle consciously echoes her

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previous words when she has Victoria say, " 'I like you,' . . . and she felt shy at saying anything so simply out" (313). Lacey insists that "I don't need anyone, don't kid yourself. I don't need anyone at all" (25). Fontana, in contrast, says, "You lie down, Victoria John, and I'll lie down beside you" (313).[8] Like the "sitting parent" who falls asleep with the little girl Felicia in her arms in the 1946 Boyle story, "Winter Night," Fontana recognizes our need for one another in our pain, and responds compassionately. Victoria, who "never cried" (320), is moved to weeping at Antony's death, crying for him, for all his lost possibilities. The women lying beside one another and the tears shed for another's pain are metaphors for a vision of life that contrasts absolutely with the terrifying vision of ravishment conjured by the starving children in Sorrel's colony, their toenails "growing inward like great yellow sabres," by Victoria's plundered body at the privy, by Lacey's mother's corpse mangled by sharks, and by the bleeding women at the *sage-femme's*.

The full measure of the final scene in *My Next Bride* can be appreciated only with the echo of a previous scene in the reader's mind: in that scene, Sorrel, justly excoriated by Peri, cries for himself, "alone, without anyone, in the dark" (311). In company with Fontana, Victoria has moved beyond the concentration on self that precludes Sorrel from weeping for anyone else, from true care for others. In the compassionate response of Fontana and Victoria—in life and in art—Boyle identifies the only possibility for our moral salvation. With the strength and awareness Victoria has gained in her journey toward self-knowledge, she has finally learned to cry, going beyond Lacey's cynical outlook or Antony's despair toward a vision of compassion for a world in pain. In creating that vision, Boyle has helped to shape a new kind of female *Künstlerroman* in which the expatriate hero of Joyce's text would indeed find himself on foreign terrain.[9]

[1] James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* ed. Chester G. Anderson (New York: Viking Press, 1968).

[2] All citations are from Kay Boyle, *My Next Bride* (New York/London: Penguin Books/Virago Press, 1986).

[3] See Sandra Whipple Spanier, *Kay Boyle, Artist and Activist* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1986), pp. 88–89. Spanier is the main source for the biographical references in my essay. See also Shari Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900–1940* (Austin, Tex.: Univ. of Texas Press, 1986).

[4] For the story of Harry and Caresse Crosby, see Geoffrey Wolff's *Black Sun: the Brief Transit and Violent Eclipse of Harry Crosby* (New York: Random House, 1976).

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[5] The epigraph might explain Grumbach's assertion that Antony is based on Laurence Vail (323).

[6] For an excellent discussion of Boyle's use of the privy as metaphor, see Spanier (p. 86).

[7] On the homoerotic resonances of this passage, see Spanier, p. 89. She comments that in the flashback scene in which Victoria and Mary de Lacey had lain embracing on the floor of the boxcar, Lacey "had advised her friend, 'Don't fall for the skirts, Victoria, not till you've given the boys a trial. . . . You'll come to it anyway in the end.' "

[8] Although Spanier discusses the erotic overtones of this scene (suggesting that while the knife of the epigraph may be seen as Antony's "next bride," the title might also apply to the developing relationship between Victoria and Fontana), she states: "It is only fair to note that Kay Boyle herself calls this interpretation of the title 'completely wrong': It applies only to Antony; in other words, death was his next bride' " (89). Spanier also points out the "striking repetition" between the flashback scene of Lacey and Victoria in the boxcar, and the final scene of Fontana and Victoria on the bed.

[9] For a good account of the male *Künstlerroman* tradition see Maurice Beebe, *Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts: The Artist as Hero in Fiction from Goethe to Joyce* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1964). Grace Stewart provides an original analysis of the subverting of this tradition by women writers in *A New Mythos: The Novel of the Artist as Heroine, 1877–1977* (St. Albans, Vt.: Eden Press, 1979). In her brilliant essay, "The Birth of the Artist as Heroine: (Re)production, the *Künstlerroman* Tradition, and the Fiction of Katherine Mansfield," Susan Gubar focuses on the "startling centrality of childbearing in the *Künsterromane* of women" and concludes that "for the woman writer who seeks to uncover not only the fiction of male motherhood, but also the factious biological metaphor, the *Künstlerroman* conventions fashioned by men are insufficient" (26). Gubar analyzes how women writers "shaped the conventions of this genre to their own purposes" and "salvaged uniquely female images of creativity" (26–27). She discusses in particular detail how Mansfield supplants the male artist's progression "towards the transcendence necessary to create art" by "coming to terms with the centrality of birth without mystifying it, by reconciling her writing with her rearing so that "she called into question the identification of artistry with autonomy" (26, 27). Gubar concludes that "finally, Mansfield's later stories . . . typify the redefinition of women as paradigmatic creators in the artist novels of feminist modernists like Dorothy Richardson, Willa Cather, and Virginia Woolf herself" (27). I am indebted to Gubar's essay for steering me to both Beebe and Stewart.

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Sexual Politics in Kay Boyle's *Death of a Man*

Burton Hatlen

When Kay Boyle's *Death of a Man* was first published in 1936, many reviewers, and even one member of Boyle's own family, read the novel as expressing pro-Nazi sympathies. Mark Van Doren, writing in the *Nation,* said that the book tries to "hypnotize the reader into a state of what may be called mystical fascism."[1] In the *New Republic,* Otis Ferguson characterized "Miss Boyle's case for the Nazi spirit" as an instance of "special pleading." As Ferguson read the novel, "Those who plot in the wine cellars and keep the swastikas burning on the mountains at night are the outstanding characters; the author's sympathy and understanding are theirs."[2] The anonymous reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* spoke of "the glamour which Miss Boyle casts over the National Socialist movement,"[3] and the anonymous reviewer in *Time* described the novel as a "Nazi idyll."[4] In the *Forum,* Mary Colum, prefacing her discussion of *Death of a Man* with the statement that "between the tyranny that is fascism and the tyranny that is Communism, there is something more suited to western people in fascism," described Boyle's novel as "a revelation of an almost mystical Nazism that is as startling to us as it was to the American heroine." And Colum quoted with approval, implying that the words represented Boyle's own judgment, a passage in which a Nazi youth describes a speech by Hitler as "like great music, like a poem being sung!"[5]

Finally, Sandra Whipple Spanier reports that even Boyle's own sister apparently read both *Death of a Man* and "The White Horses of Vienna," a widely reprinted short story of the same period, as pro-Nazi, and refused to speak to their mother for a full year "because Mrs. Boyle defended Kay's purpose" in writing these works.[6]

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The possibility that Kay Boyle wrote a pro-Nazi novel in the mid-1930s must startle anyone who knows anything about her life. For Boyle has been, as the subtitle of Spanier's critical biography states, an "activist" as well as an "artist" throughout her life, and her politics have been consistently Left. In one of her inter-chapters in *Being Geniuses Together,* Boyle reports that the Sacco-Vanzetti case—one of the great Left-wing causes of the period between the wars—awoke her to political consciousness.[7] During World War II, Boyle wrote two *Saturday Evening Post* serials and many other works designed to bolster American morale in the struggle against Nazism, and after the war she published two novels designed to warn against the danger of a lingering fascism in Europe (*The Seagull on the Steps*) and in American culture itself (*Generation Without Farewell*). In the 1950s Boyle was blacklisted for her presumed "Communist" sympathies. And in the 1960s she became an important figure in the civil rights and anti-war protest movements: her most recent novel, *The Underground Woman,* was born out of this experience. Given the pattern of political commitments suggested by Boyle's life story, it is hard to imagine that she could have become, even briefly, an apologist for Nazism. But if *Death of a Man* is not such an apology, then how do we account for the reaction of the book's reviewers, as summarized above?

I believe that the reviewers of *Death of a Man* generally misread the novel because they saw Boyle's judgment of Nazism as the central issue, whereas in fact the focus of the novel is not the pros or cons of this political movement per se. Alfred Kazin, himself a writer of the Left, seems in retrospect the most perceptive reviewer of *Death of a Man.* Kazin suggested that Boyle's "main interest . . . is in the influence of politics on the soul or the temperament, not in its effect on the outward life of men or the pattern of their society."[8] In the end, I shall here argue, *Death of a Man* does offer a judgment of Nazism. However, in the novel the virtues and vices of Nazism are, I believe, secondary to a larger concern with the effects of the will to power on the lives of human beings, and especially on the relations between men and women. In this respect, *Death of a Man* represents a natural extension of the themes of Boyle's previous novels, all of which were born out of a recognition that power and sexuality are inextricably intertwined. *Plagued by the Nightingale* explores the tyrannies of nation, culture, and family, which distort and finally destroy the love between a French man and an American woman. The portrait of Eve Raeburn, the Ethel Moorhead character in *Year Before Last,* is a memorable study of maternal-erotic possessiveness; and the portrait of Sorrel, the Raymond

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Duncan character in *My Next Bride,* provides an equally subtle analysis of the male will to control. Two of the early novels, *My Next Bride* once again and *Gentlemen, I Address You Privately,* offer courageous explorations of the power dynamics of same-gender erotic relationships. Writing to Sandra Spanier in 1984, Boyle insisted that her early novels are pervaded by issues of class and power,[9] and I would fully agree. I would also argue that the strength of these novels lies in Boyle's sensitivity to the way power operates in personal relations, including sexual relations, and her extraordinary ability to bring into focus the point at which the personal and the political meet. So too, I propose, *Death of a Man* explores the ways in which the personal becomes political and the political becomes personal, as Boyle elucidates what might be called the sexual politics of Nazism. In the novel, Boyle explores the ways in which the exigencies of power distort and finally destroy the possibility of love, in a socio-political situation dominated by the Nazi movement. Further, I believe that Boyle here sees Nazism as merely an extreme manifestation of those general patterns in Western culture which current feminist theory calls "patriarchy." In this respect *Death of a Man* seems to me an important text in the emergence of a feminist consciousness, and it is an explicitly feminist reading of the novel that I shall offer here.

If many early readers saw *Death of a Man* as a pro-Nazi novel, one primary reason is that the central male character, Dr. Prochaska, is an undeniably sympathetic character, and his commitment to the Nazi movement inclines us to see that movement in a positive light. In the opening chapters, Boyle develops a contrast between the vigorous, athletic Prochaska, who climbs about the Austrian Alps with absolute confidence, and the limp, cynical, effete Englishman whom Pendennis, the female protagonist, has recently married. But Prochaska is characterized not only by animal magnetism but by artistic sensitivity; for example, he speaks of Mozart with warm admiration. We also learn that Prochaska's exuberant charm has won him the devotion of the nuns with whom he works, and the children in Prochaska's hospital also adore him. A lean, strong Nazi, even a Nazi who loves Mozart—this we might have expected. But a Nazi who can charm a lay sister and who romps with a three year old diphtheria victim through a hospital ward—this comes as a surprise. Boyle refuses to let us hate this man. And if we cannot hate Prochaska, how can we hate the movement to which he has dedicated his life?

Prochaska is one of two principal point-of-view characters in *Death of a Man.* As a consequence, we accept, at least provisionally, his view of

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the world, including his conviction that Nazism is the only alternative to despair. As Prochaska tells Pendennis, the American heroine, "Instead of youth we have been offered despair, but the joke of it is we can't accept it, we really can't. You see we have absolutely no capacity for despair."[10] In some measure, the hope which Nazism offers is material and economic, and at times Prochaska's comments may remind us of the old claim that Hitler "put Germany back to work." But material goals cannot alone account for the fervor of the Nazis, which verges on the religious. Prochaska tells Pendennis that for the Austrians Hitler is a "Saviour" who promises "that it is no longer necessary to despair" (88). And not only to Prochaska but, it would appear, to Boyle herself (for it is the authorial voice that we hear in the following passage), Nazism seems to offer, for Austrians at least, the *only* alternative to despair:

> either a man was blind, his courage and heart had been stifled in him by a defeat too general for individual recognition or else he bore that strong forbidden name for power as . . . Dr. Prochaska and more than half the people of the country secretly and proudly bore it. (72)

The strong forbidden name here is, of course, "Hitler." In the Austria of this novel, there are only two alternatives: Hitler or Dollfuss, who led the clerical-fascist, pro-Mussolini regime which ruled Austria in the early 1930s. That is, we see in the novel no Left-wing alternative to Fascism; and indeed there was no such alternative in the Austria of the mid-1930s, for in 1934 the Dollfuss government effectively destroyed the Left opposition in a military assault on the working class district in Vienna.[11] Given the choice between Hitler and Dollfuss, we can understand Prochaska's preference for Hitler, in those pre-Holocaust days. And we should remember that early Nazism claimed to be a "revolutionary" movement, dedicated to bread and justice. Did Boyle, in the mid-1930s, see Nazism as a progressive political movement? The novel appears to hold open this possibility.

However, Prochaska is not the only Nazi that we meet in *Death of a Man*. In particular, we see a good bit of Praxlmann, proprietor of a *gasthaus* in Feldbruck and the local party boss. Praxlmann is at times a ludicrous figure, as when he laments the destruction of his *biergarten* by a bomb tossed into the yard of a neighboring, anti-Nazi newspaper, and then tossed over the wall into the *biergarten* by an alert night-watchman. But more often Praxlmann is a frightening presence. Boyle describes his "eye" as "shrewd and vicious," and his general demeanor as "violent and strong" (66). Praxlmann's brutality is particularly apparent in his treatment of the women in his life: his wife, his daughter Cilli, and his

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wife's niece Hella. Hella in particular is the object of Praxlmann's tyrannical will to control:

> "For the love of God!" roared Fati Praxlmann's voice when he saw her talking too long with the men. "Bring me some beer, one of you girls!" he shouted down the room, and he did not speak her name but his heavily-lidded eye was turned on Hella like the eye of a sultan on one of his harem wives. (75)

Praxlmann demands absolute obedience not only from family but also from the party faithful, including Prochaska. A will to power, then, and especially a will to power over women—these are, Boyle's portrait of Praxlmann suggests, another characteristic of the Nazi movement. And ultimately this will to power incarnates itself in the figure of the patriarch, who treats both real daughters and spiritual sons like Prochaska as so many possessions.

Praxlmann's women do not rebel openly against his authority, but they do find ways of asserting their female identities, and in doing so they suggest the limits of patriarchy. Of the three, Hella is most completely victimized by the situation: she comes from the still-peasant branch of Muti Praxlmann's family, and she is beginning to develop a goiter which, she fears, will lose her both her job and any chance of marriage. As a consequence, she cowers, afraid to challenge Praxlmann's authority. Muti Praxlmann, on the other hand, offers a classic example of accommodation. She is indifferent if not hostile to her husband's politics; she even mentions with disapproval an incident in which a Jew is excluded from a ski-jump competition. But Muti is no liberal—rather she is interested only in money, status, and clothes. This indifference, however, gives her a small area of freedom from her husband's will to power. Teen-age Cilli, finally, also begins, if only in a fumbling, instinctive way, to seek out an area of autonomy for herself. She rebels directly against the authority not of her father but of her mother, by refusing to consider marriage to the callow Toni, whom her mother has selected, declaring that instead she wants to "marry a doctor" (227)—thinking, of course, of Prochaska, whom Cilli too loves. In her groping way, Cilli also recoils from the violence which she feels growing in the country: "There is this thing outside and I do not know if it is right or wrong, but it is a thing like war, like death, and I cannot bear it" (181). Cilli's anguish at what is happening leads her to a series of actions which at least indirectly help the Nazi cause, but her motives are always personal rather than political: she loves certain people and wants to help and protect them.

To the oppressively masculine world of the Praxlmann *biergarten*,

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Boyle also proposes the beautifully sketched world of the *infektionhaus*, the hospital for contagious diseases where Prochaska works. The *infektionhaus* is a world of women and children, for Prochaska himself is apparently the only adult male who enters this region. Boyle begins her description of the *infektionhaus* with a resonant image of birds flying in through the open window and through the children's ward. Three boys in the hospital have been feeding the birds and have "adopted" various species: "the game was to have one's own birds come in the greatest numbers or come first to the sills" (16). The birds are described as fierce creatures: "these birds are savages," says Prochaska later. "They'd take the flesh from your palms if you let them have it" (51). But the birds also evoke a wild, untrammeled life which moves through the prison-like hospital but is never captured by the institutional structure. And indeed, the whole hospital seems to pulse with a wild, free laughter: waiting for the birds, the three boys sit "squeezing the laughter hard and silent in their shivering throats and listening, listening" (17). This world of freedom and spontaneity is available at a terrible price: only the diseased are allowed to enter. But, with a twist that may owe something to Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, Boyle suggests that perhaps only women and children, and only the sick among them at that, are able to break out of the shackles of social convention enough to experience, even momentarily, the wild, free life within them.

Over this kingdom of the wild and the sick, two aging lay sisters, Marianna and Resi, preside. Cut off from a vital relation to the male world, Resi in particular is a twisted human being. Resi is literally "twisted," for she is a hunchback; and her behavior suggests a will-to-power through sacrifice and devotion which is the female counterpart of the male will-to-power that we see working in Praxlmann. In an extended inner monologue, we learn of a series of moments when Resi was momentarily transfigured by a sense of being needed: first by her mother (235); then, early in her years as a nurse, by a dying man who held her hand and told her, "You are little, Sister Resi. I've always been afraid of women, but you're so little I wouldn't have been afraid" (236); and then by Prochaska, who told her, "I couldn't get on without you, Sister Resi" (237). The need to be needed, the need to serve: Resi is trapped in this need. And like many women so trapped, Resi is deeply convinced that her devotion has "earned" her the love of others—specifically, the love of Prochaska. Inevitably this love takes a negative twist: when Resi discovers that Pendennis has been staying the night in Prochaska's room, she is left torn and bitter, whispering "Not me, not me" (237). And in revenge she seeks to drive Prochaska from

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the hospital, only to find herself driven out instead. The fate of Resi suggests that while the *infektionhaus* may offer a refuge of sorts from the oppressively patriarchal world of the *biergarten,* this world of women and children is itself sick and twisted. But the dialectical relationship between *biergarten* and *infektionhaus,* each breeding the other, also enacts for us the inherent logic of patriarchy, in which the male will-to-power generates, as its inevitable counterpart, the desperate struggle of women to preserve for themselves an area of autonomous selfhood.

When we look at Prochaska through the lens of the woman-centered world of the hospital, he becomes a more ambiguous figure than he may first seem. He moves through the hospital as an alien presence, with "a look of hot-eyed resolution, singularly incongruous in this apparently aimless and languorously drifting tide of pain" (18). "All his life," we learn, Prochaska "had been fearful of becoming as soft as other people were" (18). In the hospital, he can daily demonstrate that he is not "soft": "the children lifted their heads and opened their mouths wide as he bade them and the glittering eye of his instrument pierced the mystery of their throats with a perfect conquering ray" (19). The language here suggests another, darker side to our Nazi hero. And indeed, a careful reading of the novel reveals that from the beginning Boyle portrays Prochaska as a man who, despite his vigor and charm, is so blinded by his male ego and his political obsession that his human responses are paralyzed. Boyle's opening sentence describes Prochaska as a "dark and hot-eyed young man moving quickly and singly . . . alone among the coupled others" (3). He moves, we learn, "as if there were no end to the power he had" (3); but the erotic energy in him is directed, not toward women, but toward the earth ("these mountains . . . all his life had wooed him . . . as the thought of women wooed him" [5]) and toward the Reich, which he sees as a woman. The sense of power and grace which Prochaska gives off is attractive, both to the female characters in the novel and to us as we read, but there is also something ominous about the man. And if we are tempted initially to see Prochaska as a stereotyped romantic lead, we come to see him very differently as the novel proceeds: as a man who has been shaped by the influence of a particular society and a particular social moment, both of which have nurtured in him a kind of "manly" self-confidence which is simultaneously energizing and crippling, since it finally prevents him from the self-surrender that love demands.

Against the figure of Prochaska, Boyle plays off her female protagonist, Pendennis, who is also both liberated and crippled by the culture which has shaped her. Pendennis is a late variation on the

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James/Fitzgerald theme of "the American girl abroad." Like earlier versions of the American girl, Pendennis is a fiercely independent person. Tearing up a letter from her father, she says, "that's what I do with orders! Every one I've ever had in my life, that's what's happened to it and he ought to know it by this time" (255–56). And she insists on her own American-ness:

> "I'm Miss America, and I've done everything there is to do in America. . . . I've gone over Niagara Falls in a barrel, and I've got the record for staying the longest time in the air without changing cosmetics. I've been divorced twelve times and I've come to Europe to find a title." (31)

The edge of sarcasm here signals that Pendennis, unlike earlier versions of the American girl, is no innocent: we are a long way from Daisy Miller, or even from some of Boyle's own earlier versions of the American girl abroad. Instead, Pendennis is flamboyantly erotic—and flamboyantly neurotic. She begins to exchange erotic signals with Prochaska as soon as they meet, and before they part "his eyes met hers again and his breath came suddenly short as if she had laid her hand for silence and in caution on his mouth" (46). But at the same time, even during this first meeting, Prochaska (and perhaps Boyle herself, for the voice here is indeterminate) sees Pendennis, for a brief, hallucinatory moment, as "a hard, bitter, cold-eyed old woman, a tight fisted witch, unasking and ungiving" (13). And indeed, Pendennis does sometimes seem a witch, given to decisions which are at best abrupt, selfish, and cruel.

The reasons for Pendennis's neurotic behavior are also clear in the novel: she, too, even more dramatically than Prochaska, is a victim of patriarchy. Pendennis's life has been haunted by her father, who never appears in the novel, but who sends her periodic letters that drive her into wild rages or panicked flights. Like Prochaska's spiritual father, Praxlmann, Pendennis's father embodies "violence and strength," a will to master: "He used to make me do everything I didn't want to do. That's why he stays put together when everyone else falls in pieces" (90). Pendennis has deeply identified with her father. "When I'm fifty," she tells Prochaska, "I'll look like him . . . the sides of my face very full and hard and mottled with drink, except I'll have my pieces of iron hair drawn back like a Lesbian's by that time and a cigar. . . . My father made a man of me. A highball before dinner every night and your friends are my friends. I'd have died with my boots on rather than have an inch of lace on me until a year ago" (93). Pendennis's attempt to "become a man" suggests that she has grown up with no usable models of

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womanhood. Indeed, Pendennis equates womanhood with nothingness, and much of her behavior is motivated by a flight from the "nothing" that she feels herself to be.

In the course of the novel, it becomes clear that it is Pendennis's American upbringing which has taught her to see herself as "nothing." The status of women in American society is established most forcefully in an extended flashback which is perhaps the most powerful single passage in the novel. Here, Pendennis tells Prochaska about her twin brother Gerald, who early established his masculine power by taming a horse with a reputation for being skittish. This achievement bonds father and son around patriarchal values of strength and power. Pendennis goes on to tell how one day, when the children were eight, they went out riding with their mother, Gerald on "father's big strong horse" (117), and their mother on Gerald's small, skittish horse. Pendennis remembers her mother as looking "severe in her hard hat but at the same time helpless and aging, but not really aging either but as if she'd had enough of it all and she didn't care what happened next, and at the same time a little bit afraid of what was going to happen" (119). The small horse was, says Pendennis, restless, and her mother repeatedly asked Gerald to trade horses with her, but he refused. Her pleas became more and more distraught: alternately, she threatened to tell Gerald's father about his behavior and offered him money, but Gerald persistently tried to bargain her up, demanding seventeen dollars to trade horses. Finally, the small horse reared up and

> shook her down backwards into the stream. The water wasn't deep and mother lay there on her back with her hat still on and the little horse walked quietly after us, shaking his head. I turned around and got to her first and she looked up at me, still looking very severe and she said, "You tell Gerald that if he'll stop and let me down now I'll give him the seventeen dollars," and that was the last thing she said. Gerald rode back into the water but he didn't get off his horse and he said, "All right, you get up then and give me the seventeen dollars," and then in a minute we knew she was dead. (121)

The brutal story of the death of Pendennis's mother tells us all we need to know about the fate of woman within the American version of patriarchy. Pendennis, because of her upbringing, is caught between a model of the female as hapless victim and a model of the male as manipulator and oppressor. Her culture has given her no usable models of how to live as a woman. In the absence of usable models, Pendennis lives by pure whim:

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> "And why am I doing it? Something like Marlene Dietrich kicking off her high heels and following Whathaveyou over the desert maybe? Don't you believe it. I'm doing it because I'm sick of the sight of my own face in the mirror and I haven't a book to read and there isn't a show worth seeing." (138–89)

But these random impulses can only briefly conceal the vacuum where her self should be. After she leaves Prochaska, Pendennis finds herself in a gay cabaret in Vienna, telling the transvestite Jeritza, "I'm nobody, nothing, only the difference is now I know it and it's not going to get me again . . . only if I wasn't ready for it it's because nobody ever told me I'd be nothing but a couple of good dresses and a hat on top" (278). In retrospect, it becomes clear both to us and to Pendennis herself that her abrupt decision to initiate a love relationship with Prochaska represents a flight from her own "nothingness." Yet it is also important to recognize that in this relationship she does become "something," by refusing the passive victimization represented for her by her mother. It also seems clear that Boyle's heart is with Pendennis in this choice; for as Spanier points out, when Pendennis chooses love over social propriety, she joins a line of previous Boyle protagonists, including Munday in *Gentlemen, I Address You Privately,* Hannah in *Year Before Last,* and Victoria in *My Next Bride.*[12]

In the encounter of Prochaska and Pendennis we are witnessing, Boyle suggests, a meeting between Old World and New, Europe and America. Prochaska has been born in a place where every object tells him he is "something really of value, of quality, either to his family or to history or to himself" (84). In contrast, nothing tells Pendennis who she is; or everything around her tells her she is nothing. But despite the difference between the sense of order and tradition which controls Prochaska's behavior and the wild struggle of wills which characterizes Pendennis's America, both cultures represent very different but equally tyrannical forms of patriarchy. Violent, strong fathers attempt to rule the destinies of both these young people. In falling in love, both are rebelling against their fathers. Boyle makes clear how fiercely Praxlmann opposes Prochaska's romance with the American girl. With his "dark seemingly swollen eyes flashing anger and hate as well at her" (206), Praxlmann tells Pendennis that she must "leave this man to what belongs to him, to the thing he has now before him to accomplish and to the wife that will one day come to him" (208). And Pendennis's father comes to Europe to "rescue" her. The disapproval of the fathers suggests that sexual love represents a defiance of patriarchy and of all forms of oppression that issue indirectly out of patriarchy. Sandra

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Spanier finds throughout Boyle's work "an almost religious belief in love as humanity's only salvation" (72), and this theme is certainly at work in *Death of a Man*. And since the fathers here stand as the enemies of love, then it seems clear that patriarchy, whether it manifests itself in a Nazi or true-born American form, is the enemy.

Pendennis, it seems, fully recognizes the implications of her love for Prochaska. She has no hesitation about repudiating her family and all it represents, in an attempt to create a new world of love. But Prochaska, unfortunately, cannot bring himself to reject so quickly his "father" Praxlmann, or his abstract love of "Austria." Because his feelings for Pendennis run counter to his political commitments, Prochaska experiences his love for her as an implacable destiny. When Pendennis offers herself to him, Prochaska feels, in language that echoes the idiom of D.H. Lawrence, a "keen and powerful tide of blissful torment [sweep] through his blood" (80). The language here suggests a loss of volition and self-awareness, as does another Lawrentian phrase later: "Dr. Prochaska felt the blood swooning in him" (95). A loss of will, an ecstatic melting-away of the self: such is the form which love takes, at least for a willful, masterful person like Prochaska. And as Praxlmann fully realizes, feelings of this sort have no place within a political movement and a social structure dedicated to mastery and control.

However, the opposition between political commitment and love is not absolute. For both can cause a sense of ecstasy, and Prochaska, who loves the Reich as he loves a woman, sometimes has difficulty telling the difference between the two. Climbing into the mountains with Pendennis to light the swastika bonfires, Prochaska feels "a marvelous sense of living, of being alive and of giving life, as if his flesh and the fire in it were rich enough to embrace the world as great music or as the words of a great faith were gigantic enough to give the world a wild and terrible embrace" (143). What unleashes this ecstasy in Prochaska? The mission on which he is engaged? The woman beside him? Both of them? Neither he nor we are sure. And a little later, as they watch the burning swastikas, not only Prochaska but Pendennis too is caught up in this erotic-political ecstasy:

> They stood like children staring, their eyes fixed raptly on it, their lips parted, watching the separate living worms of flame moving tenderly, vulnerably in the balloons that cupped and magnified their light. The girl did not say to him, bewildered, Why are we doing this? Why have we climbed up here? What are we doing this for? Why? And he did not answer, Believe me it is

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> not necessary to think, only to follow and to believe. It is not necessary to reason, only to feel the blood moving and to know. But for a moment their two hearts spoke the same inexplicably youthful and inexplicably terrible words, saying, Nothing having brought us here or together except the flesh of our bodies, the intoxication of movement, the mystery of the darkness together, nothing having any significance except those things we have not done before, our own knowledge of those things to be seized with the hands, the eyes, the lips, the limbs even while the mind is shed as cowardice is shed, disdained like caution, the mind cast off and even the reason for it cast aside and the direction of the body not lost but weaving magically, like a trumpet call unwinding through the flesh, the destination not even questioned, residing as it does in every instance, every breath that's taken, NOW. (173–74)

In this passage, singled out by several reviewers, the emotions evoked by devotion to blood, race, and land are so compelling that for a moment even Pendennis, the self-centered American, is caught up in them. This passage reminds us that the iconography of Nazism affirmed not only strength but also youth, joy, and action, and that Nazism rejected the intellect as debilitating, "Jewish." But how can we tell the difference between an erotic and a political "swooning" into the bloodstream?

In any case, Pendennis surrenders to the emotional appeal of Nazism only for a moment. Even before she and Prochaska descend from the mountain, Pendennis begins to recognize that this moment of ecstasy has been purchased at the price of her selfhood. The lovers, in flight from the Austrian police, take refuge in a mountain cabin. There Pendennis looks at herself in a mirror and thinks to herself, "I'm nothing, nobody. . . . I am whichever way he's going. I'm not even me" (190). In this passage, Pendennis articulates for the first time that sense of herself as "nothing" which becomes a running motif in the novel. And as soon as the lovers descend the mountain, Pendennis begins to defend herself against this threatened annihilation, by attacking that sense of surrender which she had experienced on the mountain:

> "climbing the mountain they tell you to, believing what they tell you just as it's told to you, and how can you go on swallowing it and swallowing it, why doesn't something start choking you in the middle of every speech they're roaring at you, each one a little bit louder than the other so you won't have the peace and quiet to put two and two together? How can you get it down and keep it down—" (209)

Here it is clear that Pendennis has come to see herself and the party as

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rivals for Prochaska's loyalty. Both erotic and political ecstasy may entail a loss of rational control, but Pendennis knows the difference between the two; and she knows that one nourishes the self while the other destroys it.

As Pendennis comes to recognize the fundamentally patriarchal and thus anti-erotic character of Nazism, she decides that Prochaska must choose between his love of her and his devotion to the movement. In their final quarrel, Pendennis explicitly links together the authoritarian, militaristic, and anti-Semitic strains in Nazism:

> "One day a man can't jump off a wooden platform and break his neck because he's a Jew and the next day a girl can't go for a walk on Sunday with you and you take your orders, you swallow it all down along with your pride and your sense or what have you! One day they're going to put a pretty little uniform on you with hearts for sweetness on the elbows and say, 'Now you run along to war, dear,' and won't that be a lot of fun?" (254)

Prochaska replies, "You don't know anything about it! . . . You don't understand for a moment what we're doing—you can't see it—" (255). And at this moment, as Prochaska refuses the choice which Pendennis demands of him, we know that the love affair between the two is over.

Even though Prochaska refuses to give up the Nazi movement for love, he himself later has a moment of recognition.[13] The occasion is a trip into the mountains to meet a courier from Germany, who is carrying money and messages for the Austrian Nazis. The courier, in a passage cited in Mary Colum's review, launches into an ecstatic description of Hitler's speech on the 1934 purge of the Brownshirt faction in the German Nazi party:

> "My God, it was like great music, like a great poem being sung!" said the boy's voice quickly out of the dark. "If you could have heard it down to those last words," and he began saying them aloud in young dramatic exultation, repeating them as if they were sweet to the senses like the taste of wine. . . . (297–98)

Suddenly, Prochaska finds himself repelled by all this frenzy, which seems to be, as he looks about at the inhuman serenity of his beloved mountains, merely silly. He says to the courier,

> "So what do you think will happen in the end? A lot of uproar and shouting and bloodshed and marching in the streets and then what will we come back to but this quiet, this absolute stillness of the mountains in the end? Where in the world do you think we're going. . . ." (298)

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The young courier is, Prochaska realizes, "drunk, stupefied on the thought of death and the rapture of his own fearlessness to meet it" (298); and with this recognition Prochaska at last becomes able to choose life—and to choose Pendennis.

But Prochaska's recognition of the death-wish in Nazism comes too late to allow him to break the chains of history. For some months, Prochaska mopes in Feldbruck, longing for Pendennis, unable to believe in the movement as he had once believed, but seeing no alternative. Meanwhile, Pendennis mopes in decadent Vienna, hiding from her father, talking obsessively about her "nothingness." Prochaska and Pendennis are released from this paralysis by a sequence of accidents. Cilli tells Prochaska that the Austrian police are on his trail, and shortly thereafter he learns by chance Pendennis's address in Vienna. He goes in search of her, only to learn that Pendennis has already moved on to Salzburg. While she is staying there, she hears the news that Dollfuss has been assassinated by Austrian Nazis in the course of an unsuccessful coup. The assassination leads to a national round-up of known Nazis, and Pendennis decides that now Prochaska will need her. So she boards a train to Feldbruck, in an attempt to find him. And the lovers might indeed have found one another, Boyle suggests, except that Prochaska once again lacks a sufficient faith in love. When he cannot find Pendennis in Vienna, he decides that she is, after all, merely a selfish, faithless human being: "as if," he thinks, "I ever had a girl or as if she was ever anybody's girl or anything better than a taste left in the mouth and in somebody else's mouth the next place she goes and in how many mouths in other places" (318). So Prochaska gives up the search, and as a consequence the trains carrying the two ex-lovers pass (literally) in the night.

Death of a Man seems to me a remarkably prescient and courageous novel. The courage here lies in Boyle's willingness to go beyond stereotypes of gender, nationality, and politics, in creating a male character who is both erotically attractive *and* deeply political, and who is erotically attractive for the very qualities—physical vigor, passionate devotion to a cause, a capacity for ecstatic self-surrender—which have led him to commit himself to the Nazi movement. In Pendennis, Boyle has created a female character who is, in her alienation from her own culture and her uncertainty as to her identity, deeply neurotic, but whose very neuroses dramatize for us the destructive consequences of specifically American forms of patriarchy. (After World War II, Boyle would explore this theme at much greater length in *Generation Without Farewell*.) In flight from the sense of herself as "nothing," Pendennis

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seizes upon the Nazi doctor, who at least "believes in something" (278). Her love is thus itself twisted, neurotic. Conversely, Prochaska is the product of a culture which equates eros with weakness, and so in the end he is unable to make the final commitment to Pendennis that might have allowed this love to survive. Nevertheless, the love between them allows Pendennis to glimpse an alternative to "nothing," while this love also liberates Prochaska to recognize the death-frenzy within Nazism. As this dialectic works itself out, we come to an understanding of the destructive effects of patriarchy upon both these young people. Their struggle to escape the patriarchal control exercised over them by the Fathers (Praxlmann, Pendennis's father) and by the patriarchal values within their own minds ends, finally, in ironic confusion. Yet we feel good-will for both of them, and in this sense the novel achieves a tragic resonance. Both Prochaska and Pendennis are finally lost creatures, but their struggle nevertheless affirms a sense of purpose in human existence. As read from the feminist perspective which I have here proposed, *Death of a Man* also seems—despite the complaints of early reviewers, who often saw the book as a collection of lyric fragments—an integrated work of art, in which every detail works toward a subtle, complex effect. Fifty years after its initial publication, *Death of a Man* should be read for the delicacy of its art and the power of its insights. It also deserves to be recognized as one of the small classics of twentieth-century American writing, and as an important moment in the emergence of a feminist consciousness.[14]

[1] Mark Van Doren, "Under the Swastika," *Nation,* 143 (24 October 1936), p. 494.

[2] Otis Ferguson, "The Brown Blouses of Vienna," *New Republic,* 88 (21 October 1936), p. 322.

[3] Review of *Death of a Man,* by Kay Boyle, *Times Literary Supplement,* 3 October 1936, p. 788.

[4] Review of *Death of a Man,* by Kay Boyle, *Time,* 28 (12 October 1936), p. 87.

[5] Mary M. Colum, "The Book Forum," *Forum,* 36 (December 1936), p. ix.

[6] Sandra Whipple Spanier, *Kay Boyle: Artist and Activist* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1986), p. 120.

[7] Kay Boyle and Robert McAlmon, *Being Geniuses Together 1920–1930* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984), p. 217 ff.

[8] Alfred Kazin, "Kay Boyle's New Novel," *New York Times Book Review,* 11 October 1936, p. 7.

[9] Spanier, p. 90.

[10] Kay Boyle, *Death of a Man* (New York: Harcourt, 1936). Parenthetical page references are to this edition.

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[11] This attack is mentioned in Boyle's novel, pp. 28–29.

[12] Spanier, p. 118.

[13] See also Spanier, p. 122.

[14] I am indebted throughout this essay to Sandra Spanier's path-breaking book on Boyle. I would also like to thank Virginia Nees-Hatlen, who read this essay twice, who persuaded me to change my mind on one key point, and who offered several helpful suggestions. Finally, I am pleased to report that Peter Glassgold, senior editor of New Directions, decided to recommend the publication of a new edition of *Death of a Man*, to appear in 1989, after reading an earlier version of this essay.

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Kay Boyle's High Country: *His Human Majesty*

Ian S. MacNiven

When Hugh Ford quoted Glenway Wescott's comment on Kay Boyle, "She was more completely abroad than the rest of us,"[1] he wanted to emphasize the extent of her commitment to Europe, the fact that she had gone quickly beyond the role of expatriate to become wife and adopted daughter of France, Austria, Germany. Adopt Europe she did, despite the fact that she took with her for her art the vision of the innocent American woman, female counterpart of Henry James's Christopher Newman, a vision that has never left her. From each of her three husbands Boyle received a portion of Europe. She went to live in France in May 1923 as the wife of Richard Brault, a French aviator turned businessman. The story is told in *Plagued by the Nightingale* (1931): Brault gave her provincial France—protective of its own, tight, bitter, hard, straight-jacketed in the "tailleur gris" her in-laws tried to force upon her. Her French-born American artist and writer second husband, Laurence Vail, gave her the freedom of the great capital, Paris, and subsequently of the Mediterranean (at Villefranche) and of the Alps. Her last husband, Joseph Franckenstein, an Austrian baron before he renounced his title, gave her a vision of Europe in conflict and, paradoxically, gave her back America. It was during World War II and with him that she re-entered the mainstream of American life, and it was due to the attacks she and Franckenstein sustained during the McCarthy era that she came most openly into conflict with U.S. policies and prejudices.[2]

Before their legal troubles began, Franckenstein had provided Boyle the model for the protagonist of the book in which she returned to the United States, the book that may well be her most successful

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novel, *His Human Majesty* (1949), her powerful evocation of some of the pervasive themes of modernism: exile, expatriation (this time in America), disillusionment, redemption. The book was very important for Boyle: begun in 1943 when she was struggling unwillingly with an "elegant pot-boiler," *Avalanche*,[3] *Majesty* is a problem novel with a resolution that engaged Boyle's passionate concern: the defeat of xenophobia and the affirmation of love and fidelity. The novel is an exploration of recurring themes important to her fiction. Sandra Spanier lists *Majesty* among those of her novels that contain "several major threads that run through the body of Kay Boyle's fiction: a concern for the gaps in understanding that separate human beings, an almost religious belief in love as humanity's only salvation, and an interest in universalizing particular experience through allegory and myth."[4] Finally, *Majesty* embodies techniques and concepts that reaffirm Boyle's link with such prominent modernists as Joyce, Conrad, and Lawrence. The novel is important both for Boyle's development as an artist and as an achieved work of art.

His Human Majesty, set in army training camps in the Colorado mountains and in Leadville (called Quarry in the novel), is based on Franckenstein's experiences with the U.S. Army mountain infantry in the Rockies and in the Aleutian Islands. It is the fifth of Boyle's war novels, following *Primer for Combat* (1942), *Avalanche* (1944), *A Frenchman Must Die* (1946), and *1939* (1948). Realistically enough, the cast of characters in *Majesty* includes many American citizens plus an assortment of war refugees from almost every European nation where men ski. The volume is divided into what are almost two distinct novellas, "Enemy Detail" and "The Main Drag." In the first section the hero, Fennington, incurs the guilt of betrayal by making love to Connie Avignon, actress wife of his comrade-in-arms and chess opponent Pater. Fennington is also unsuccessful in his attempt to rescue Connie from exposure after an accident in the mountains. In "The Main Drag" the suspicion if not the fact of betrayal is expanded to include all the foreign-born and even the American Indian Sweetwater, when it is bruited about that these men, who might not be "loyal," will be cut from the ranks, with "Only the hundred per centers going overseas."[5] Fennington is redeemed through several generous acts and especially through the love of Augusta, a young barmaid and the namesake of a heroic pioneer, Augusta Tabor, whose diaries Fennington has read. When the unit entrains for the East Coast and Europe it is Cooper from California, the most prejudiced of the critics of the foreign-born, who remains behind, while the refugees have become accepted by the

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American-born soldiers. This bare outline is fleshed out with a major fire, two accidental deaths, an attempted rape, an attempted murder, a blizzard during which seven cars plunge into a canyon, and many reported catastrophes.

Like Franckenstein, Fennington in *Majesty* is a classical scholar and an athlete, and their names have the same number of syllables and the same rhythm. But the similarities extend far beyond education and skiing ability: Joseph Franckenstein was most evidently a man uncommonly driven by moral imperatives. An aristocrat with well-established connections (his father was a Hapsburg, his mother an Esterhazy), he chose exile from Austria over association with the Nazis. Arrested by the French as an enemy alien, he chose internment over the Foreign Legion, which he scorned as a refuge of felons and other desperate men. Offered a pass to England in 1941 through the agency of his cousin Sir George Franckenstein, then Austrian Ambassador in England, Franckenstein chose to travel by refugee ship to the U.S., perhaps mainly because Kay Boyle was going there. Franckenstein was the model for a male type that enters Boyle's fiction with Sepp von Horneck in *Primer for Combat*. The name is significant: "Joseph Horneck" was an alias later used by Franckenstein for his 1945 OSS mission in Nazi-held Austria. The description of Sepp von Horneck in *Primer* matches Franckenstein perfectly: "Sepp is a big-boned, narrow-faced man with a good profile and darkish, reflective eyes; thirty-five or so, rugged, awkward in movement, but delicate and sensitive in thought and speech."[6] Franckenstein is also the prototype for Ferdl Eder in *1939*, and his moral presence is felt in the daring, fighting French and American protagonists of *Avalanche* and *A Frenchman Must Die*.

Among Boyle's war novels it is in *A Frenchman Must Die* and *His Human Majesty* that the point of view shifts most convincingly from woman to man. The example of Joseph Franckenstein may have helped Boyle break away from the figure of the young American woman so frequently dominant in her earlier novels, with the notable exception of *Monday Night*.[7] Some of the reasons behind the creation of these dominant heroines were certainly biographical. The family members Boyle most admired during her youth were her mother, Katherine Evans, her grandmother, Eva S. Evans (who in 1874 had been one of the first women to receive an appointment in the Land Grant Office in Washington), and her Suffragette aunt, the political cartoonist Nina Allender. The men in Boyle's immediate family, her father, Howard, and her grandfather, Jesse Peyton Boyle, called "Puss," had been the ones she and her sister had rebelled against in their youth. Her father

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was weak, while Puss, household tyrant though he may have been, was a fussy little man and, worst of all, was racially prejudiced and a fanatical conservative who walked out of the house when Kay Boyle's mother entertained guests whose social or political views he detested. Among Boyle's friends in France were many extraordinary men—Robert McAlmon, Harold Stearns, Harry Crosby, Eugene Jolas, Raymond Duncan, and Samuel Beckett immediately come to mind—but in her first two husbands, at any rate, she does not seem to have found strength of character to match her own. Richard Brault was a generous-minded man, tolerant even of his wife's desertion of him for the poet Ernest Walsh, but he was unable to keep up with her artistic vocation. Laurence Vail, a talented writer and painter, lived with a self-indulgent abandon that precluded the fulfillment of his own promise and interfered with Boyle's work. After years of seeing herself as the stable center of concerted action and of moral judgment in her various relationships—and of transferring that obligation to her women protagonists—Boyle found in Franckenstein a male exemplar of solid political and social virtues. Fennington in *Majesty* is her most convincing portrayal of a virtuous man.

A comparison of Fenton Ravel, a paragon and the woman protagonist of *Avalanche* (Boyle's one best-seller), with Fennington will show how similar was Boyle's conception of their natures. Fennington is quite consciously, I believe, intended as a complement to Fenton in *Avalanche:* only a middle syllable need be added to her name to arrive at his, and he possesses her virtues of loyalty and innocence to a considerable degree. Fenton's love for Bastineau, the French partisan she travels into the mountains to search for, is apparently grounded on a single circumstance and declaration described by Bastineau: "You were fifteen that spring. . . . That night of the thaw, when the white horse threw you, and I picked you up and carried you home . . . . You said, 'Bastineau, I love you.' "[8] Although Fennington is many years older than Fenton, he too is inexperienced in love: his one romantic attachment before the time-present of *Majesty,* to an English girl he had met after returning her lost dog, is represented only by a photograph of the Irish setter, and when he falls in love it is with the suddenness of Romeo: first with Connie Avignon and then, after her death, with Augusta, the "bar girl," modern embodiment of the frontier heroine Augusta Tabor. Fenton, admirable though she may be, remains two-dimensional, the courageous unblemished Juliet of a mountain romance, a Juliet out of Gottfried Keller rather than Shakespeare. Fennington, however, is rendered credibly three-dimensional by his fall

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from grace, his individualizing Oxford diction, and his well-developed friendships with Pater and Carmichael, the loquacious son of a mortician from Buffalo. Similar comparisons disadvantageous to *Avalanche* could be made of most of the characters in the two novels.

A comparison of the plots of *Avalanche* and *Majesty* shows how much more subtly *Majesty* has been developed. In *Avalanche* de Vaudois, a secret agent of the Gestapo, is thwarted by the young lovers. Period. While there is plenty of suspense, there are few if any surprises in the actions of the characters, few varying shades of moral judgment. In her novels dealing with war, Boyle is best around the edges of the conflict: her most secure field is the emotions, the psychology, of men and women, not their most violent actions. The violence is arbitrary, melodramatic. De Vaudois stumbles into a steel animal trap; Bastineau leaps down the chimney like Saint Nicholas to rescue Fenton. *Majesty*, although filled with dramatic action as the outline already given suggests, is mainly about interior, private issues (guilt, redemption, love), and these are developed in conversations and interior monologues that are more important than the actions themselves.

An element that sets *Majesty* apart from most of Boyle's earlier fiction is her exploitation of the humorous possibilities of the macabre. The *presentation* of the macabre was not new for Boyle. In *Monday Night* Wiltshire Tobin, patterned after Boyle's friend and Paris familiar Harold Stearns, investigates Monsieur Sylvestre, a famous toxicologist whose testimony, it turns out, has sent innocent men to execution from no other motive on his part than vanity. Boyle does not in *Monday Night* exploit the grim humor potential, for instance, of a murder committed using the poison on flypaper, whereas in *Majesty* Carmichael can hardly speak about corpses without seeing the humor of bodies embalmed and beautified for eternity. *Monday Night* is a good story about an engaging ne'er-do-well and his failure to receive the credit for a brilliant piece of sleuthing, but it is not ennobled by the major themes of *Majesty*. On the contrary, the unwashed and rumpled figure of Wilt Tobin, with a red line across his sweaty forehead where his hat liner cuts in, probably excites more pity and distaste for his condition than admiration for his qualities of mind.

The macabre stories of Carmichael save *Majesty* from the unrelieved earnestness, almost the sentimentality of *Avalanche*, *A Frenchman Must Die*, and *1939*. His sardonic, balancing look at life from the embalmer's table provides the obverse to the romantic view needed to balance the idealism. Men and women are, after all, at once creatures of nobility and idealism, crass sensuality and baseness—and they

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become, ultimately, cold meat to be buried with barbaric rituals, their sins forgiven:

> "I gave them the works," Carmichael said. "Erased the lines of greed and lust from their faces and wreathed their lips with heavenly smiles. I closed their eyelids for them forever, filled the empty pouches of dissipation with undertaker's wax, restored youth and innocence . . . ." (6)

The army tries to make men, even the physically inept journalist Pater, into efficient soldiers; the men try to remake one another; and the women try to reform the men. Carmichael mocks all this earnest reforming with the tale of his proud performance as a Pygmalion on one of his first great efforts, the embalming of a girl accident victim, nameless, flattened by traffic: "The state gave her to us, picked her up on the highway one summer dawn after an all-night traffic had passed over her and ironed her out. . . . They brought her in a briefcase, folded over like a paper doll" (61). The story is told during a fire which has resulted in the death of a man, and the juxtaposition is significant: Carmichael uses laughter to fight off the fear of death.

Carmichael's is the voice of a sort of Theater of the Absurd optimism:

> "Now take this war, which I venture to say you could have for the asking," he said, "it offers you two possibilities, the first of which cannot but persuade you of the evanescent quality of hope and all endeavor. There's the possibility that you will die, and the possibility that you won't die . . . and if you die, it's O.K., and if you don't die it's O.K. too, because that still leaves you two possibilities. There's the possibility that you'll be buried in a single grave, and the possibility that you'll be buried in a mass grave, and . . . ." (262)

Carmichael, Irish-American, is kin to Finnegan, and his wake-stories are, like those about Joyce's legendary hero, life-celebrating. Death provides the key polarity of the book: it becomes a subject for laughter in a novel describing the preparation of men and women for war and death—and along the way they make peace with one another and celebrate life. Carmichael closes the book with his last word on promotion, the military, the war: pointing toward a flag-draped coffin, he says, "Speaking of stripes, there's a guy over there that's got thirteen of them" (295). Faced with a world that has much in common with the runaway train Carmichael describes near the end of *Majesty*, the tough-minded assert life with laughter. Carmichael teaches Fennington to reject the talking out of sentiment: when Fennington tries to steer

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him into a discussion about what his wife means to him, Carmichael parries: "Not here! Not now!" (293). The real lovers choose silence, the lust-driven boast. Cooper carries on about his "air-line hostess" and his "hat-check girl"—and then he is not on the train when the ski troops leave for combat.

Part of the strength of *Majesty* comes from the marvelous set-pieces: in "Enemy Detail" the rescue of the German P.O.W. from the ravine by Fennington and the French Desiré Jones, with the temperature at eighteen below zero, which is balanced near the end of "The Main Drag" by the comic rescue carried out by the same two men of the drunken soldier, "Felled in the battle of Delirium Tremens . . . overcome by the concerted action of the hot and cold water faucets" (221), from a bathroom at the North Star Hotel. Boyle's use of counterpoint—stories told concurrently with actions to which they are not directly related—transcends mere entertainment. The rescue of the soldier unable to find his way out of the bathroom and under the delusion that he is in combat is neatly balanced by Carmichael's tale about a man who wrote his way out of the army, after covering "the length of eight tables" with "approximately one hundred and sixty thousand words" (217) and who finished his writing career in the asylum with a "major opus," "Four hundred and twenty thousand words pricked by the point of a pin onto twelve and a half rolls of toilet paper" (220). Some of the important episodes exploit suspense along several lines. In the climax of the book, Don Juan Cooper attempts to rape Augusta in the back seat of a car skidding in a blizzard toward Denver. Henson, a young soldier intent on going A.W.O.L., warns the driver just in time to prevent his driving over the edge of the canyon, and in coming to Augusta's rescue restores his own sense of duty.

The pioneer Augusta Tabor and her modern namesake bring out the virtue already existing in good men, saving them from despair and degradation. The idea of women as the natural protectors of men appears early in Boyle's work. In "Three Little Men," first published in *Criterion* in 1932, the narrator describes her father as a timid man with wrists that were "beautiful, tight and small,"[9] a man who "would always tell me that his head pained him, and he would turn it away from us so that we never saw into his eyes" (63). The narrator recalls thinking as a child "that I would place him on my strong wrist, like a falcon, and hood his small bowed head with my fingers so that he need not see the world" (64). In the early work the men tend to be either weak like the father described here, or benevolent tyrants against whom the women scheme and struggle, like Oncle Robert in *Plagued by the Nightingale*. One man

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who is neither a tyrant nor weak, Martin Sheehan, the Ernest Walsh figure in *Year Before Last,* is rendered dependent on his women by tuberculosis.

In *Majesty* the dependency/support roles alternate: Augusta, "one woman who believes in one man," gives the "child" soldier, Henson, the courage not to desert; Henson, "fighting as Fennington's and Raleigh's deputy" (198), comes to Augusta's rescue during the attempted rape by Cooper; Augusta inspires Fennington to reopen communications with Pater and thus begin his, Fennington's, absolution; Fennington consoles Augusta in her despair on the receipt of the news of her husband, Curly's, death. (Note that Boyle is again playing the echo game with names: Connie's death frees Fennington to love Augusta, Curly's frees Augusta. The good dead give way to the good living. As the irreverent Carmichael says: "They heard we wanted the joint, and they moved out for us. The dead are those who give us elbow room" [127].) Above the buried dead are the mountains that represent peace and purity. Fennington on a lonely ski run near the end of "The Main Drag" meets a young bear just awakened from hibernation, and he skis down into Quarry and buys a postcard from Augusta (and realizes his awakening feeling for her), the postcard he sends to Pater that begins Fennington's absolution for the sin of betraying Pater with his wife. The town may be smudged and dirty—the smoke rising, the mud dirtying Fennington's skis—but within that outpost of civilization some men and some women safeguard the virtues of the race, its "Human Majesty."[10]

The conflict between the corruption of the town and the aspirations of some of its inhabitants is reminiscent of D.H. Lawrence, and in other ways as well *Majesty* fits very recognizably into the tradition of the great modernists: of Joyce in the variety of narrative technique, of Conrad in the disclosure of the darkness as well as the better qualities of the human heart, of Lawrence in the emphasis on the power of love. These are subjects for a full discussion elsewhere, but to be brief, there is clearly a Joycean complexity in levels of narration. Often the present narrative time, memory, and an interior voice (given here as often elsewhere in Boyle's work in italics) all operate in the same episode. In the car journey toward Denver in the blizzard, a fourth narrative thread is added, the consciousness of the "Latvians," the generic name given by the native-born to all "foreigners." Although not physically present in the car, "the Latvians had come to take their punishment, dressed up in khaki as if they were Americans, but speaking the language as no native spoke it, and bearing their national griefs and their national betrayals in

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the government-issue rucksacks on their backs" (184). External scene and interior monologue run concurrently throughout the novel.

While the theme of the darkness within man—his thinly concealed propensity for betrayal, rape, and murder—is common to many modern authors, what seems especially Conradian in *Majesty* is the way in which Fennington's betrayal is concealed from Pater: Fennington, desiring to confess to Pater, lets the truth of his betrayal and of Pater's wife's infidelity stay hidden. It would be "too dark altogether"—Conrad's words—to have told him. Boyle is very conscious of the paradox that a person lives or is faithful until the *news* of his or her death or infidelity is known: Augusta dreads telling her husband's parents of his death, since, as she and Fennington know, her words "would sentence her own husband to die" (286).

Boyle stands much closer as an artist to Lawrence than to either Joyce or Conrad, however. She was much interested in Lawrence, and in 1931 wrote a short story, "Rest Cure," based on his final illness. Spanier has noted Boyle's "romantic preference for intuition" and her association of evil with "the absence or failure of human bonds,"[11] and her emphasis in *Majesty* upon the "brotherhood of men" (233), all very Lawrencian concepts. But Boyle's idealized and understated portrayals of people in love show her to be closer to the standard conception of romanticism than Lawrence is, with his physical descriptions of the sex act, and his insistence on the essential and elemental power of the *body* as an equal partner with the *mind*. Also, while to Boyle war itself is the supreme failing of man as a political creature, *Majesty* holds out hope that on individual terms men and women can triumph; so too Lawrence: man-in-the-aggregate fails in his political novels, in *Kangaroo* and in *The Plumed Serpent*. Boyle's rejection of war is intuitive, impulsive; Connie cries out to Fennington, "Why in the name of God are you fighting a war? What have you, or any other living young men, to do with death?" (70). Lawrence rejects not only war, but the entire exercise of military discipline, as in "The Thorn in the Flesh," in which a young soldier suffering from acrophobia deserts, and in "The Prussian Officer," a story of the sadism underlying physical punishment. On the scale of iconoclasm, Boyle's rejection does not seem to go as deeply as Lawrence's: she finds something worthwhile, even noble, in the exertion of training and in the male camaraderie that grows from it.

It is in her emphasis on tenderness in human relations that Boyle comes especially close to Lawrence, and the relations do not have to be those between men and women: the German-hating Desiré Jones treats the injured German P.O.W. "with impersonal male compassion" (114).

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Lawrence recognized that tenderness formed a more lasting and ultimately more powerful bond in human relations than raw passion, and indeed Lawrence's title for the first draft of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was *Tenderness*. Lawrence's statement of the paramount importance of tenderness could apply equally well to *Majesty:* Mellors comes to realize that "It's a question of awareness . . . and that natural physical tenderness which is best, even between men," but only *after* Constance Chatterley has explained his own nature to him: "Shall I tell you what you have that other men don't have, and that will make the future? . . . It's the courage of your own tenderness."[12] One recalls that Constance Chatterley—familiarly called Connie—first loves Oliver Mellors when she observes his tender handling of the pheasant chicks. In *Majesty* another Connie turns to Fennington whose gentleness contrasts with the leering interest of most of his comrades. Finally, his gentle and protective attentions to Augusta when she receives the telegram announcing her husband's death win Fennington her love. The soldiers themselves fear tenderness will unman them: fatigued to the point of collapse by maneuvers, "those who were children among them so close to tears that had the words of tenderness been spoken then, they would have . . . weakly cried" (121). A past war forms the backdrop for *Chatterley,* a novel about men and women crippled physically and/or emotionally by the Great War. In *Majesty* there is no place for physical cripples in the elite ski troops, but the emotional scars are there. All the Europeans carry specters: Hungarian Sergeant Jeno his dead wife, drowned in the Loire while fleeing the Nazis; French Desiré Jones his mother, perhaps dead in Grenoble; Berlin Jew Rudi Mendl his guilt for escaping the slaughter of his people; and so on. The Americans also carry scars, including emotional cicatrices from the invasion of the Aleutian Islands, an attack in which some casualties were caused by friendly fire.

In Boyle's story a human agency, often disguised as accident or luck or fate, often steps in to avert evil: Henson, intending to go A.W.O.L., prevents the rape of Augusta by Cooper; Fennington by appearing in time to cut Mendl down prevents his hanging-murder by Tennyhook. However, there seems to be no sure retribution: Cooper is transferred to a safe ground job in the Army air force—where he will be able to continue his womanizing—and Tennyhook's attempt at murder is never disclosed. Connie Avignon dies trying to help the Afrika Korps prisoner escape because for her a personal loyalty—she had known and loved him at Kreuzeck before the war—transcends public loyalty. Similarly Fennington, after exhorting Henson *not* to go A.W.O.L., does

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so himself to help Augusta over her grief. However, there seems to be no intervening force for Boyle when human efforts fail or are not made: Sergeant Jeno's wife dies swimming the Loire, seven cars go into the canyon before Henson stops the chain of disaster, Rudi Mendl's family is wiped out. Fragile though mankind's hold may be on life, life itself comes through as far more important than crime or punishment or even justice: hours after the news of Curly's death has been wired to her, Augusta and Fennington embrace, "and the forsaken dead lay quiet as they kissed each other's mouths" (289). "Life!" proclaims Carmichael through all his macabre mortician's tales. "Life and love!" respond Augusta and Fennington. If these are archetypal figures acting out old truths, these truths are nonetheless given memorable expression.

I have tried to show that both Kay Boyle and her art have owed a great deal to Joseph Franckenstein, that her husband eased her return to America. He not only preserved for her the European courtesies and cosmopolitan outlook to which she had become accustomed, but he also let her see the U.S. through the eyes of a foreigner, a refugee, an immigrant.[13] *His Human Majesty* is highly successful in craftsmanship and theme. In it Boyle has demonstrated a near-perfect integration of theme and structure, the counterpoint between action and both spoken and internal dialogue, and in her use of humor she robs death and war of their terror without reducing them to sentimentality and triviality. *Majesty* contains perhaps Boyle's most balanced statement about guilt and redemption, about the relationship between men and women, a shared trust in which neither party dominates.

[1] Hugh Ford, "*She Was More Completely Abroad than the Rest of Us,*" Special Session, Kay Boyle in Print and in Person, MLA Convention, San Francisco, 29 December 1979.

[2] In 1952 Joseph Franckenstein was called before a Consular Board in Germany and, although he was cleared unanimously, he lost his job with NATO (he was Acting Editor-in-Chief of the Frankfurt *Neue Zeitung*). Another consequence of the hearings, which included accusations made against Boyle as well, was that she was blacklisted by the *New Yorker,* to which she had been accredited as a European correspondent. After a long legal battle the pair got their names cleared, and in 1962 Franckenstein was sent as Cultural Attaché to Teheran. By the next year he had died of lung cancer and a related brain tumor.

[3] Sandra Whipple Spanier, *Kay Boyle: Artist and Activist* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1986), p. 165. Spanier quotes Boyle's January 1943 letter to Bob Brown, in which she comments about *Avalanche:* "I am

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working hard on this blasted serial. . . . I've got fifty thousand words to go, and God, it goes slowly."

[4] Spanier, p. 72.

[5] Kay Boyle, *His Human Majesty* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1949), p. 150. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

[6] Kay Boyle, *Primer for Combat* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1942), p. 157.

[7] One reason Boyle has given for her preference for *Monday Night* among her early novels is that in it her protagonist is *not* a "young American woman." (Conversation with Ian MacNiven, 21 June 1979).

[8] Kay Boyle, *Avalanche* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1944), p. 177.

[9] Kay Boyle, "Three Little Men," *The First Lover and Other Stories* (New York: Harrison Smith and Robert Haas, 1933), p. 61. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

[10] Boyle, *Majesty;* part of the novel's epigraph from William Blake is repeated on pp. 90 and 268: "Silence remain'd and everyone resum'd his Human Majesty."

[11] Spanier, p. 170.

[12] D. H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (New York: Grove Press, 1957), p. 334.

[13] Boyle's poem, *American Citizen Naturalized in Leadville, Colorado,* is her tribute to Franckenstein's experience of becoming a citizen.

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Tails, You Lose: Kay Boyle's War Fiction

Edward M. Uehling

In his famous introduction to the anthology *Men at War,* Hemingway observes that in combat "learning to suspend your imagination and live completely in the very second of the present minute with no before and no after is the greatest gift a soldier can acquire."[1] That statement has become, at least implicitly, the measure for all war fiction because the central figures in modern war novels have been revealed to us as they succeed and, more interestingly, fail to maintain such a perspective. Paul Bäumer (*All Quiet on the Western Front*), Frederic Henry, Billy Pilgrim, Paul Berlin (*Going after Cacciato*), and other such figures take on dramatic, moral intensity as they struggle with physical and psychological brutalities of war. Yet there are many stories of war—Vietnam has reminded us of that—and Kay Boyle's short fiction of World War II makes equally compelling statements about war and its consequences.

Harold Krebs, the shell-shocked veteran of Hemingway's "Soldier's Home," longs for "a world without consequences"; in such a story as "The Lost," Boyle captures what would terrify Krebs: a world of overwhelming consequences for "survivors" without homes to which they might return. It is Boyle's world of consequences that gives us the other side of the coin; however disquieting, it is one we must understand if we are to know the full cost of war. The social and political wisdom of Boyle's war fiction is all the more remarkable, though, for its skillful telling. Fiction written during or shortly after a war often struggles to find its moral and aesthetic center because the artist has not yet established sufficient distance (Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* is more typical than Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*). The relative

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speed with which Boyle could write about World War II and her control of difficult materials invite our closest critical attention.

But what, besides combat, is the proper material of war fiction? The nineteenth-century German historian Clausewitz understood "that war is simply a continuation of political intercourse"—an idea that helps us to consider the depth and complexity of its human components. Certainly his perception of war as "another form of speech or writing"[2] expands our awareness of the tensions and consequences of war. It includes the before and after as well as Hemingway's "present minute": in short, the other side of the coin.

Such an interest in language forms the basis of the nearly overwhelming metaphor for war in the film *Apocalypse Now*. In *Heart of Darkness* (its source), when Marlow seeks Kurtz, he wants to hear the voice of the great man because he assumes a moral, reasonable order to the world is possible through communication. In fact, he thinks of Kurtz not as doing but discoursing. That faith dissolves when he discovers instead the atavistic figure who can only mutter "The horror! The horror!" The further dissolution of language is Marlow's, though, for when he returns to the presumed normalcy of society, he can offer only lies in explanation of what has happened.

Boyle exhibits a similar fascination with the possibilities and failures of language as she examines the people—soldiers and civilians; men, women, and children—of World War II Europe. I want to discuss two stories, "Army of Occupation" and "The Lost," although there are many others ("Hotel Behind the Lines," for instance) which similarly deal with this issue of language and are more overtly political, as well. But these two, both describing the aftermath of war, look from several angles at the gap between private thought and public utterance. In each story, as language fails, we see and hear more than the failure of moral courage: we discover a failure of human understanding and sympathy that suggests complete spiritual sterility.

"Army of Occupation" begins in Paris as a troop train prepares to return with American soldiers to occupied Germany "after a furlough spent . . . in pursuit of love."[3] The presence of American GIs so dominates the scene that there is no other sense of time or place: we are told, "it was not a French train" (439), and the MPs and GI ticket men stand, passing judgment on the French girls who have come to say goodbye. Whatever values emerge must come from the American soldiers on that train and the unnamed American correspondent who travels to meet her husband.

The intense drama of this brief story unfolds in a frightening

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counterpoint of voices and levels of meaning. As the woman boards the train, ignoring gapes from the men on the platform, we hear a chorus of voices from within. Drunken and terrible, it is described as a "sad, wild longing outcry—no longer recognizable as singing" (440). "'Roll me over / in the clover,' wailed the voices in grief from behind the closed compartment doors, and far ahead, in almost unbearable sorrow, other voices cried out 'Reminds me of / The one I love' in drunken, unmelodious complaint" (441). We hear, but the woman is apart from this, perhaps by temperament: "the things that passed through her mind were different. She did not look toward the men, and she did not seem to hear them calling out" (440). From the outset, Boyle underscores the difference in sensibilities between the woman, whose "look of modesty, of shyness and vulnerability" (440) is reflected in the self-willed reality of her private thoughts, and the men, whose calls, whistles, and roaring are aggressively animalistic. The disparate voices of the story, motivated by fear, perverse longing, or disgust, are powerfully expressive but insular: no one hears or listens.

Stepping into one compartment of this soiled, discordant world, the woman faces three soldiers, each as distinctively ugly in speech as he is in physical presence and gesture. One, a sergeant, crudely waves and caresses a cognac bottle that hangs "between his spread knees" (441). The second, a big red-haired man, is educated enough to refer to Lochinvar and Morpheus but joins the sergeant in trying to coax her to drink from their bottles. The third, described as a farm boy, isolates himself and only occasionally blurts out contemptuous remarks about French war brides being no ladies, "then turn[s] his face to the dark of the window again" (443). From the moment she sets foot in the compartment, we witness a striking cluster of images that mock civilized, cultivated behavior. The sergeant's first "words" are not words at all but a baying wolf call. The big soldier apes polite conversation as he suggests that the woman is a commodity to be consumed: "'Take a glance, gentlemen, at what they're passing around with coffee and leecures tonight'" (441). Indeed, throughout the confrontation of the story, he associates her with the bottle of cognac. Before the sergeant has grabbed the woman with encouragement from his big companion—"'You take it first. I'll take what's left'" (448)—she belies her assertion that she is not afraid.

As a signal of her growing fear, the narrator distinguishes what the woman does say from what she thinks by italicized passages that indicate her attempt to impose a sense of calm: for instance, "*in thirteen hours now, a little less than thirteen*"; or, "*They can't do anything, not a single thing.*

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In a little while he'll walk down the platform, looking in every window for me" (448). Ironically, once inside the compartment, she does begin to hear the crude chorus, although it has grown less distinct, and even takes some comfort in the singing as she tries to think of her husband and not those with her.

At the same time, there are no instances of genuine communication as the two soldiers first attempt to seduce the terrified woman and then nearly succeed in forcing themselves on her. Their words, wholly artificial and perverse, distort the reality she internalizes and we would wish for. For instance, the sergeant attempts to evoke pity from the woman by showing her a certificate that verifies his attendance four days earlier at the funeral of his infant son by an English war bride. But as his comrade drunkenly observes, " 'Does it occur to you that the lady is bored with all this kind of talk? Does it occur to you that beauty incarnate doesn't give a snap of her dainty fingers for your relatives?' " (445). By resorting to speaking about her as though she were not present, the two demonstrate their crude intention and the inadequacy of any response she might offer to halt its progress. At this moment, the third soldier, from whom one might hope for moral outrage, can muster only disgust for everyone unlike himself: "with the cap tipped low on his brows, [he] turned away from the rushing darkness of the night outside and looked at them bleakly, almost reproachfully, again" (446). He issues another brief, unintentionally ironic condemnation of French war brides (and really all women); " 'I found out too much just in time. . . .' He looked at them in something like hesitation a moment, as if there were more to say and as if he were about to say it, and then turned back to the fleeting darkness. . . . 'Roll me over / In the clover,' came the faint, sad chorus of crying down the corridor" (446).

Yet we have not experienced the utter failure of language until a blue-eyed corporal enters the compartment, ostensibly to offer his seat in another car to the woman, but really to make a childish bid for her favor. A brief sampling of his declarations reveals him as foolish, not gallant: " 'You're American. You're wonderful.' " Or, " 'You're beautiful. You're like all the girls at home who don't come over' " (449). And his last words: " 'My God, you're beautiful. I love you. I respect you' " (452). Although we are told "his ears [were] deaf to everything except what she might say" (449), she says nothing to him until the increasing threat of physical violence drives her to attempt to accept the offer of his seat. Instead, the corporal literally takes the woman's place, is essentially raped with the ubiquitous bottle in her place.

While the "farm boy [sleeps] in peace against the cold, dark window

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glass" (452), the sergeant knocks the corporal senseless with a bottle. As he lies "as if in sleep," the sergeant prepares for another blow, when the woman cries out: " 'Don't touch him! Don't you dare to hit him again!' " (452). The story closes with an ironic juxtaposition of inadequate voices and silences. The woman's own private voice fairly races in an effort

> to save from annihilation the actual flesh and bone of all that remained of decency. "*They're other people on this train, like people you know, like people you see in the street. . . . They're Wacs, and brothers, and sons, and husbands . . . they're people singing. . . . People who understand words, if I can get to them . . .*" (452–53)

But interspersed with these silent pleas are the voices of the chorus, "far, unheeding, calling out in nostalgia" (453) and also the narrator's careful words which describe the woman's furious exit from the compartment. To the woman's final spoken words—"Get out of my way!"—the sergeant makes a noteworthy response: "And he did not speak, but, half smiling still as she flung by him, he lifted his hand and stroked her soft, dark hair" (453). The story's final words suggest that what she runs from may be no worse than what she runs to—"toward the sound of the sad, sweet, distant voices in the rushing train" (453). What is real? The loneliness of those voices, as well as the tenderness perversely evoked by their description? Or simply their message—"Roll me over / In the clover."

The paradox of Boyle relying on words for her art when developing this idea of failed language is perhaps even more pronounced in "The Lost." This is a story of children displaced by the war and the American woman who manages a Children's Center from which they may be officially relocated. As in "Army of Occupation," setting reinforces a distorted pattern of historical connections. Once a massive baronial manor house in Bavaria, the Center conveys to the arriving America Relief Team "the chill of winter and silence and death that stood like a presence in its feudal halls" (515). But that is only one past reality of the place: during the war, it served as a Selection Camp for genetic and racial losers who were dutifully recorded, photographed, and sent to labor or extermination. From their neatly alphabetized records, their pictures haunt us: "It was the eyes of these men and women, who were there no longer, which looked now at the Americans, and beyond them, upon some indescribable vista of hopelessness and pain" (515). Against such a background, the American presence seems more orderly than useful—a source of food and playground equipment, but not of restored identity.

The story's most powerful representation of "hopelessness and

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pain" comes through its many voices. Three figures, called "boys" by the narrator, are addressed as "men" by the American woman. Orphans and mascots of various U.S. Infantry units, they are neither civilians nor children. How to name or understand them is more difficult still because of their speech and what it implies. The oldest, Janos, is fifteen, once was Czechoslovakian, calls himself Johnny Madden, and speaks with the accent of the black sergeant from Tennessee, Charlie Madden, by whom he hopes to be adopted. The other two are younger, perhaps fourteen and twelve, and remain unnamed. The fourteen-year-old, filled with cynicism, looks for an angle or a private deal and refuses to recross the threshold of the Center and the child's world it suggests. "His accent might have come straight from Brooklyn," we are told, "except that it had come from somewhere else before that, and, as he spoke, he folded his arms upon his breast, and spat casually" (517). The youngest, whose grandfather is eventually located in Naples, is able at least superficially to rejoin the world of swings and sandboxes, but his voice parrots that of the GIs with whom he has lived.

During their initial interview, the woman discourages hope of adoption in the practiced litany of a middle-level bureaucrat:

> "And probably when the G.I.s made you those promises they thought they would be able to keep them. . . . I've talked to some of these men, I've had letters from them, and I know they believed they would be able to keep the promises. But there were other kinds too. There were some kinds who didn't care what happened to you men afterward. . . . They wanted you to learn how to drink and smoke and gamble and shoot crap and use the kind of language they used—"

The twelve-year-old's reply betrays his misunderstanding: " 'I begin shooting crap in Naples,' the small boy said in his high, eager voice. 'I clean up seven bucks the first night there.' " For once her composure is punctured: " 'Look, kid . . . if Italy's your country, perhaps you ought to pack up and go back there' " (520). The play of language in this exchange is remarkable. Her irritation leads her to replace "men" with "kid," a term nearer to the truth but still without sympathy or even recognition of individuality. Moreover, both speakers' use of "crap" to describe the game of dice, "craps," suggests that neither the woman nor the child fits in this strange world of war; it further hints at the ineffectuality of such talk/"crap." The woman evokes a startling reply from the boy: " 'I ain't no Eyetie no more,' he said and he did not raise his eyes to look at her because of the tears that were standing in them. 'I'm American. I wanna go home where my outfit's gone' " (521).

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Janos has watched the sunlight reflect blankly upon her glasses and has listened to her as "neither woman nor American, perhaps not human being even, but a voice—disembodied, quiet, direct—which might be coming now to the words they had been waiting to hear her say" (520). The words will never come; instead, this scene introduces a terrifying isolation as these characters continually fail to go beyond expressiveness toward communication.

In fact, throughout "The Lost," people rarely look at or hear each other. That failure develops most obviously through numerous images of dark and lightness. For instance, the second hayloft scene, in which Janos brings table scraps to the second boy, contains many plays on light and dark that underscore shifts in language and its ultimate inadequacy. Janos crosses the stable door "in the darkness" and finds the boy framed by the window through which there are "stars shining clearly . . . and Janos could hear his [the other's] voice speaking out across the hay-sweet dark" (528). The words are even harder and more defensive now: " 'My God-damned lighter's gone dry as a witch's tit,' the boy said. 'I've got to get me to a PX and get me some lighter fluid' " (528–29). Perhaps for him there is already no other possibility of light than that of the now empty Zippo. His sweater, we are told, "showed dark against the starry square of night" (529). It might be argued that his language makes him darker than the night; certainly the contrast of his fierce despair with Janos' insistent hope for a future sense of place rings clearly in Boyle's representation of their voices. Offering a nearly empty bottle of schnapps to his older companion, the outsider says, "'Have a swig, kid,' " echoing the woman's retort. Then there is more tough talk: " 'I've got to get me to a man's-size town where there's a PX quick,' the boy was saying in the darkness" (529). To Janos' innocuous reply, the other begins laughing and Boyle writes, "He lay . . . beyond Janos in the darkness" (529).

For the sixth time in this scene darkness is mentioned as Janos recalls Sergeant Madden's instruction on the naming and placing of stars. Two qualities of his declaration are noteworthy. First, the reference to stars and thus to light and hope is linked to the one trustworthy figure in Janos' world. Although we do not hear his buddy's words, they obviously have remained with Janos as proof of the order represented by Madden. Equally revealing, Janos conveys all of this as though he is speaking to himself or at least without expecting that his words can become part of a real communication in the darkened loft. We discover that such words, with their implicit faith in happy endings, can elicit only the briefest acknowledgment of pain before the facade of

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the Brooklyn accent resurfaces: " 'Oh, Christ' " the other boy mutters as he curses a system where rank has privilege, a system that will always exclude him. Another spasm of ironic laughter jerks from him and he dismisses Janos' hope: " 'You listen, kid, . . . The cards is stacked against us' " (530).

Hearing these American dialects apart from the sources that should accompany them makes us wince, particularly because the topics addressed would be painful even to adults. All three children speak of their parents' deaths matter-of-factly; their voices would be utterly detached except that they are eager to prove that they may go "home to America" because their parents have not survived. The unconscious mimicry of their voices echoes their empty lives.

Finally only Janos remains, writing every night to Madden, who has taught him to fix things, and practicing the mechanical skills that he hopes to use in Madden's garage. But the final image of darkness, Charlie Madden's race, catches him. It is, as the woman explains, "the color question."

> Janos stood there listening to the words she said, and, as he listened, the woman again ceased being woman, ceased being human being even, and it was merely a voice in the shed that spoke quietly and bitterly of the separate lives that must be lived by people of different colors, as she had on that first day spoken of the hopes that might never come to anything at all. (532)

Yet the final sorrow of this unresolved story is not that Janos cannot live with a black man in Tennessee. It is the manner in which he rejects even the compromise of living with another family in America. "Neatly and inaccurately" he composes the polite lie to Madden and disappears without a trace: "Yesstidy I talk to the US consil Charlie and what do ya think now? Seems my fammillys jus as good as they ever waz so Charlie I make up my mynd sudden to go back whar they waz waiting for me Im shure ya thinks its for the best Charlie so I says so long" (534).

Earlier, Janos' writing every night might be regarded as a form of light in the darkness. But the effect of his final letter is quite different. Here its flawed form and substance underscore the displacement of meaningful language by an English that intends to protect both sender and recipient but does not connect; an English that is distorted, false, occupying yet lost. Either way, heads or tails, the world of Boyle's war stories is an unforgiving, lonely place.[4]

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[1] Ernest Hemingway, ed., *Men at War: The Best War Stories of All Time* (New York: Crown, 1942), p. xxvii.

[2] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War,* quoted here from p. 1 of W. J. T. Mitchell, ed., *The Politics of Interpretation* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1983).

[3] Kay Boyle, *Fifty Stories* (New York: Penguin Books, 1981), p. 439. Subsequent references to "Army of Occupation" and "The Lost" appear parenthetically within the text.

[4] Special thanks to Professor John Feaster of Valparaiso University and Vara Neverow-Turk of New York University for generous comments on Boyle's stories and this text.

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Call Forth a Good Day: The Nonfiction of Kay Boyle

Elizabeth S. Bell

Noted as a stylist and awarded distinguished recognition for her short fiction, Kay Boyle, in her prodigious writing during the 1930s, earned for her fiction and poetry an enthusiastic and discriminating following. Her later reputation, born perhaps from her reporting of post-World War II Europe and nurtured in the caldron of McCarthy's 1950s, encompasses another element of Boyle's concept of what a writer should be, for Kay Boyle is now additionally recognized as an articulate spokesperson for a variety of political and social issues, a voice of society's conscience, and—not coincidentally—a crafter of the essay as well. Rather than being a separate manifestation of Boyle's writing, the political activism of her recent career is a direct development of the concerns she expressed in her earlier poetry and fiction. Her essays, spanning almost sixty years of this century, reveal the connections that unite her work and chronicle the growth of her artistic vision.

Boyle's essays about literature or writing or writers themselves, those written in Europe before World War II as well as those written after her return to the United States in the 1940s, demonstrate convincingly the growth of Boyle's commitment to and development of the full scope of literature as a profound form of communication between writer and audience and culture. She began with the aesthetic conviction that the writer must draw from deep engagement with his or her themes, but as she saw and experienced the turmoil of the Spanish Civil War, World War II, and the metaphorical McCarthy-era war, she became convinced that writers must become committed crusaders, speaking for those who have no voice and addressing the injustices of contemporary life. While she earlier called for writers to be deeply

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concerned, she now wants both deep concern and the courage to articulate for a less sensitive world the truth that must be said.

During the late 1920s as neophyte writer in the ferment of Europe's artistic community, Boyle wrote two significant reviews for *transition,* one discussing favorably William Carlos Williams' *In the American Grain* (1925) and the other dealing negatively with Hart Crane's early poetry. The underlying concern she expressed in these essays revolves around the writer's responsibility for accuracy, both that of image or archetype—as she articulated in both essays—and that of language—as she argued more specifically in the Crane essay.

The earlier essay, "In the American Grain" (1927), focuses on Williams' attempt in his book of the same name to redefine the American literary heritage. He returned, Boyle tells us, to the documents, court letters, diaries of the past to recapture an unbiased version of life as it was, without the overlay of "borrowed interpretations" based on a perhaps more attractive false image too often attached to any systematic account of the past available in our century (28).[1] In the process, Williams discovered an authenticity—"sound and color and smell" (29)—that Boyle finds invigorating. Just as Boyle, Eugene Jolas, and their contemporaries in Paris were decrying the limp and inarticulate poetic diction of the late Victorian and Edwardian ages and calling for a Revolution of the Word to inject vitality and meaning into twentieth-century literary language, so Boyle here rejects with Williams the pallid and lifeless portrayal of the American heritage that was contained within "the national American mind" (28).

Her 1928 review, "Mr. Crane and His Grandmother," provides a conjunction of the issues concerning image and language, for Boyle faults Crane on both counts in his poetry. In an extension of her theme from the Williams essay, Boyle's most telling difficulty with Crane comes from the cavalier portrait he painted of his grandmother in "My Grandmother's Love Letters" (*White Buildings,* 1926). She resents the "gently pitying laughter" he granted to his grandmother as he led her through "much of what she would not understand," for Boyle finds the woman "a better bet than he" (83). Boyle abhors Crane's patronizingly chauvinistic portrayal, for it denies real acquaintance with the woman herself and illustrates a profound lack of understanding on Crane's part of the reality of her life—by extension that of all women within the American experience. For Boyle, whose own fiction demonstrates a strong autobiographical thread and an unswerving drive toward recreating in fictional context the real and true, Crane's lack of insight indicates a serious flaw in his poetic vision. In contrast, Boyle's earlier

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review of William Carlos Williams' *In the American Grain* commends his nod of recognition to the "Pocahuntus tradition" which speaks authentically of the female American experience as the alternate tradition to the "Pilgrim or the Indian polished to bronze" (27).

Yet for Boyle, Crane's writing is ultimately unsuccessful because it lacks vitality and humor; in fact she finds that he uses words to observe truth, finding them useful in "hiding a human fear" (32). She contrasts his poetry with a graphic and visually explicit passage about wild boar hunting from Robert McAlmon and, instead of McAlmon's crisp and clear language, shows Crane's poem to be clouded in essentially incomprehensible images. His meaning is not communicated to his audience because it is not unwrapped in the vital, vigorous language the twentieth century demands.

In attacking Crane's use of highly abstract images, Boyle by definition clarifies her own stance in the matter. In many ways her attack on his imprecise poetic imagery extends the concern she expresses in her review of Williams' work. She craves accuracy of language in much the same sense and with very much the same fervor with which she rejoices in Williams' call for precision in historical image; for her the two demands are, in fact, tightly interwoven. In a later decade, the 1960s, Boyle refers to herself and her earlier compatriots in Europe as resistance fighters in a particular context: "The resistance was against the established English language, and the fight was for the recognition of a New American tongue" (38). In the 1928 Crane essay, she was actively engaged in the validation of this new tongue, particularly in poetic language, and she found Hart Crane's latest book of poetry to be a throwback to a tradition better left behind.

In book reviews produced during the 1930s and very early 1940s, Boyle returns to these two themes, faulting for example Katherine Mansfield for belonging to an older world and Elizabeth Bowen for lacking connection to the real world. Yet she blends her concerns for the writer's precision with a growing demand for passionate commitment to one's themes in the literature one produces. In Mansfield's case, Boyle finds a "lovely, proud, appealing woman" whose best stories and tragic life had kept her immune from a true evaluation of her work. Many of the stories she produced, with only a handful of sparkling exceptions, are shallow and lifeless, "not enough, for what the intent must have been, not love and comprehension for the persecuted young or old, or satire bitter enough for those she would condemn" (54). The passion is lacking, and more sadly, Boyle believed Mansfield knew it. Instead of the issues of life and death, she is confined,

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according to Boyle, to a world of "irritable and irritating themes" (54). Bowen, too, suffers from a lack of deep commitment, creating a "singularly immature and ungrateful theme" (48). In her earlier books, Bowen's collective protagonist—regardless of name or occupation—seems to Boyle to be too much a victim, too little aware or assertive to engage in meaningful action, too pallid to contain significant insight. Boyle's review contains hope for Bowen's latest effort, *Bowen's Court,* for in her opinion it represents "a truly heroic effort to connect with reality at last," perhaps indicating the birth of a deeper commitment or perception on Bowen's part (50).

One writer of this period, the years immediately before World War II, whom Boyle finds to be noteworthy is William Faulkner. Her 1938 review of *The Unvanquished*, "Tattered Banners," praises his "hot devotion to man's courage" and his passion and "fury to reproduce exactly not the recognizable picture but the unmistakable experience" (55). She finds Faulkner's commitment to his themes to be not just the province of *The Unvanquished* or any given of his novels, but of his work in its entirety. He is a risk-taker who explores his themes with insight and conviction, making him "the most absorbing writer of our time" (56). In fact, Faulkner matches Boyle's description of the ideal writer, for he combines precision of image and language with that deep commitment to his themes she believes to be so necessary.

These early essays follow standard formats, concentrating on an individual writer and perhaps specific works of that writer. The prose is clear, the point of view definite, and the persona reasoned. As models of their kind, stylistically and philosophically well-honed, these early essays allow Boyle to deal with writers within the context of their own canons. She looks for internal significance and themes, demanding of the writers a dedication to their individual visions and themes. The revolution she supports during this time is an aesthetic and conceptual one: re-visioning language, reconceptualizing reality, making poetry and literature vital in this twentieth-century world. While her own fiction of this period deals with more political subjects, she does not demand that kind of commitment to social change of her contemporaries.

By the mid-1940s, however, Boyle's world had dramatically changed. From her special vantage point as a newly returned exile of sorts, she observed statewide reactions to the cataclysm in Europe. Her 1944 essay, "The Battle of the Sequins," conveys with almost Swiftian satire the outrage she felt at the societal nonchalance she saw: In the midst of a world gone mad in war, with death and dying everywhere

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one looked, the scuffle of well-dressed customers for a department store's sale-priced pieces of spangle takes on for some more meaning than the real life-and-death battle going on throughout Europe. The essay's persona magnifies the irony involved by reporting in matter-of-fact tones the grabbing and shoving of the women at the sales counter, while recognizing that moving among them are the ghostly faces of dying soldiers and victims of the war, complete with battlefield and jungle landscapes. The women in the store are cautioned not to look too closely—a needless warning—for "you will see something you do not wish to see" (157). The unexpected juxtaposition of such a trivial setting as a department store with the profoundly moving issues in this essay heightens its ironic effect and demonstrates a new willingness on Boyle's part to experiment with essay form for the sake of communicating a vivid message. Furthermore, although the essay does not deal directly with either literature or writers, it signals a new element in Boyle's philosophy that she would soon attach to her literary essays. After all, Boyle and her generation had witnessed a world-wide loss of innocence: in the post-Holocaust age Boyle knows that no one, especially not the writers, can afford to be as complacent as they had been in the age that existed before.

Boyle's subsequent essay, "Farewell to New York" (1947), marks a turning point in her literary commentary. Although the focus of this essay—spoken in the voice of "the Spaniard"—is predominantly socio/political, Boyle uses it to introduce the writer's role in world events. The Spaniard tells her that when a political man is exiled from his country, "he is maimed and mute," but a writer in exile can retreat into "a spiritual terrain of silence which is native to him, and which he can turn to in any country where he is" (74). Because the writer can create this native soil, the writer by nature is not compelled to be silent. Boyle closes the essay by addressing her friend personally, from the perspective of a later, wiser time, to tell him that she feels guilt because so many who had been given the opportunity to speak out "a long time ago" had remained silent or non-committal or deliberately isolationist (76). She calls these writers by name—Pound (in 1937 before his involvement in World War II Italy), Waugh, Eliot—and allows their own comments to speak volumes for them.

In technique this essay experiments with time, point of view, persona. Unlike Boyle's earlier literary commentary, it ignores aesthetic concerns directed toward a particular writer's work; unlike later essays it accuses without providing a model of appropriate behavior. Yet the essay establishes Boyle's guiding principle: it no longer will suffice for

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her to write—even as passionately as she has always done—of deep commitment and precision of language, the aesthetic concerns of a less traumatized world, without adding to those issues a call for involvement on the part of those—the writers—who have access to the pages of world thought. Boyle's philosophy does not so much change its course as that it adds societal cogency and purpose to the elements of commitment, passion, and precision that she has always valued.

In "Farewell to Europe" (1953) Boyle explains the personal necessity she felt of returning to America to speak out against McCarthyism. One of her earliest concerns, as explored rather impersonally in her 1927 essay about Williams, is the nature of one's American identity. In 1953, she felt this concern to be even more immediate and its impact far more personal. Her own background, as she tells us, contains many strong voices raised in defense of individual freedom and its corollary, individual responsibility. Yet in the essay she must also chronicle a growing disbelief in American democracy on the part of many Europeans of her acquaintance, for they had heard too loudly and too long the strident voice of "McCartair," the McCarthy who would change the lives and fortunes of many Americans before his day in the sun ended (96). Boyle tells of her friends who advise her to stay in Europe where she will be freer to speak out than in the suddenly repressed and oppressive America. It is Boyle's recognition of the irony of this situation and her commitment to the values of the democratic country of her heritage that compel her to return to America, against the wishes and better judgment of her friends, to "speak out with those of the other America clearly and loudly enough so that even Europe will hear" (98). Her emphatic defense of American individual freedom coupled with her realization that such defense was not immediately forthcoming leads her to establish a central metaphor that recurs in her essays for the next several decades: the writer's "voice" and the related need for "speaking out."

In "A Declaration for 1955" (1955), she turns her passion for commitment into a clarion call for all writers in America, for democracy demands "that one take part in it" (63). Wiser and more determined in 1955 than she had been earlier, Boyle recognizes the enormity of McCarthyism's threat, whether in the voice of McCarthy himself or in the apathy of those afraid to speak, and she calls for the Artist to live up to his or her moral responsibility for changing the world. Recalling that Thomas Mann—who would appear in several of her post-World War II essays—placed the moral and ethical responsibility for any given age on

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its writers, she urges the Artist to become crusader: "The transforming of the contemporary scene is what I now ask of all American writers" (65).

By 1964, McCarthy had long been discredited, but the silence he engendered was still deafening. For Boyle it was no longer sufficient for just the Artist to speak out, but the young must be given the courage and the insight to do so as well. Boyle writes to teachers of writing in the *NEA Journal* (1964) that learning "how to release reluctant students to speech" must be a major consideration for them (86). In a later essay, "The Long Walk at San Francisco State" (1970), Boyle identifies a writer/teacher/Artist who has done just that—Sonia Sanchez, who urged the students in her creative writing class to use their own language to describe their own worlds, to write "poetry that would have meaning to others in their community, and that is probably one of the things that good writing does" (83). Inherent in the essays of this period is a growing awareness on Boyle's part that those who have traditionally remained silent or been rendered voiceless must be empowered to speak for themselves and for their counterparts. The writers of this period whom she praises are those who have with courage and clarity addressed the issues of contemporary life: James Baldwin, Edward Dahlberg, Dylan Thomas, Emanuel Carnevali, and others.

In many ways these essays, particularly the later ones with their heavy emphasis on socio/political action and concern for justice, complete a circle, uniting the Boyle of the activist late twentieth century with the young Boyle of the 1920s. She herself makes this connection in "The Triumph of Principles" (1972) in which she reminds us, "I remember the days in Paris when we who were writers or painters or composers wrote pamphlets and distributed them in the streets and cafés. I remember when we signed manifestos and read them aloud on street corners, following without any humility whatsoever in the traditions of Pascal, Voltaire, Chateaubriand, Victor Hugo, Zola, so that the world would know exactly where we stood, for we considered ourselves a portion of the contemporary conscience, and we had no pity on the compromiser or the poor in spirit of our time" (190).

The young Boyle wanted writers to express with accuracy and passion the truth that is around them. The mature Boyle can no longer satisfy herself with accurate portrayals of the past or with language to capture the present. She wants nothing less than to spark the voices that will shape the future, and those with the courage to do so must write, must produce a language and a forum for those who find themselves without political power or presence. For herself and with great faith in

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the integrity of the Artist, Boyle can say with conviction, "It is a good day when the writers speak out loudly and clearly" (191).

[1] Kay Boyle, *Words that Must Somehow Be Said: Selected Essays of Kay Boyle, 1927–1984*, ed. and with an introduction by Elizabeth S. Bell (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1985). All references to the essays in this collection will appear parenthetically in the text.

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Joyce and the Drama of Cognition: Escher as a Visual Analogue

Barbara Stevens Heusel

Familiarity with our world and our perceptual apparatus (our eye and brain mechanisms) deadens our perception, and so we need artists to shock us into seeing. James Joyce and M. C. Escher provide masterfully the necessary moments of surprise, trompe l'oeil, and tricks of the brain, to give us insight into cognition. They create a powerful conjunction because of their complexity and their play with our learned responses. Juxtaposing Escher's visual play and Joyce's verbal play forces us to look at processes we usually overlook or take for granted: moments when perception becomes cognition and when cognition can become art.[1] Then we can analyze our own responses, as readers and as viewers.

Joyce's most basic step in recognizing how cognition becomes art was his habit of scrupulously recording the moments of insight he called "epiphanies." Epiphany grows out of a long line of what M. H. Abrams categorizes as the "illuminated Moment."[2] "By an epiphany" Stephen Dedalus in *Stephen Hero* means "a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself."[3]

Joyce's synthesis of two historical patterns—Aquinas' demonstration that inner conflict is as real a subject of art as outer conflict, and Poe's realization that a work of art is a retracing of an emotion[4]—showed him that epiphany names the final stage of cognition. He was able then—by retracing the labyrinth of actions, gestures, thoughts, and feelings that lead to an illuminated moment—to record the universal drama, the acting out of the stages of apprehension or cognition, the artistic process.

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Unfortunately for students of literature, neither poetry nor prose can render unanalyzed, unsynthesized impressions, epiphanies, first-hand with the ease that the visual arts can. Because we can absorb Escher's tricks almost instantaneously, his teasing of our visual cognition highlights what could, in Joyce's prose, otherwise remain abstract. In addition to exercising the connections between the eye and the brain, Escher—and Joyce—manipulate the eye-brain relationship, tricking us into believing impossible figures that are impossible but, nevertheless, true.

Using five of Escher's prints, I will demonstrate how Stephen's aesthetic theory helps us follow the pattern Douglas Hofstadter calls, in discussing Escher, the "Strange Loop,"[5] a closed or reverberating loop. Joyce's explanation, which does not differ from Stephen's significantly, helps us follow the labyrinth of pathways a mind takes when viewing, and reviewing, Escher's work; our slide-that-by-me-one-more-time reaction, or the remapping of the paths, re-creates the loop or cycle Joyce recognized as artistic process.

It is interesting to notice how the following passage from *Stephen Hero* applies to Escher's *Day and Night* (Fig. 1).[6] This is Stephen's prosaic explanation of the first stage of his theory, simply the first stage of the perceptual process, the figure-ground stage:

> Consider the performance of your mind when confronted with

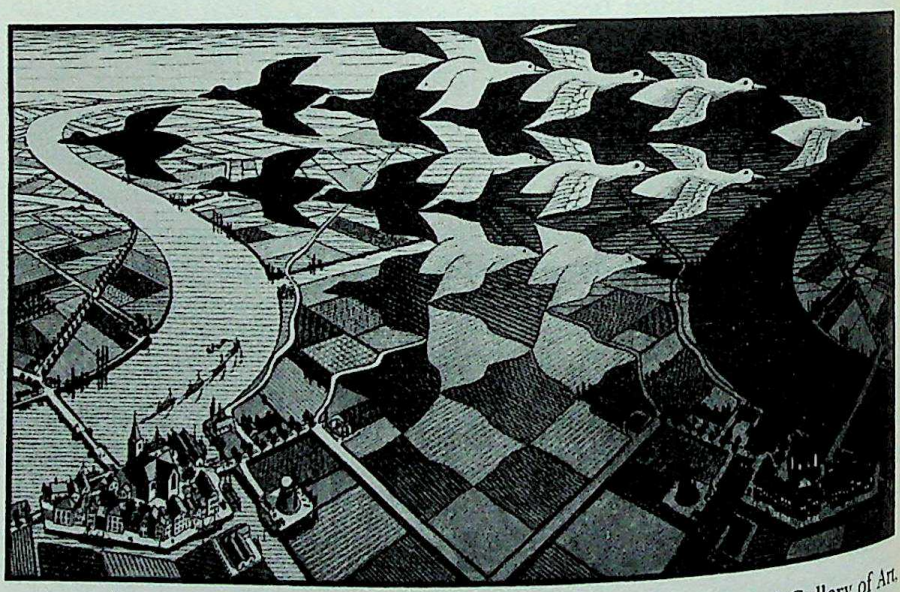

Fig. 1 Day and Night (Photograph by courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.)

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> any object, hypothetically beautiful. Your mind to apprehend that object divides the entire universe into two parts, the object, and the void which is not the object. To apprehend it you must lift it away from everything else; and then you perceive that it is one integral thing, that is a thing. (*SH*, p. 212)

While Stephen is using object-ground only in its simplest form, not as a paradoxical figure, we see that Escher is playing with two paradoxical figures: object-ground reversible figures and figures that spontaneously change their position in depth. Several circumstances coalesce here to create the reader's illuminated moment. We notice at the center of the print that the eye and brain can focus on either light birds or dark birds but not on both at the same time. We must—as Stephen tells Cranly—lift one or the other away from everything else. The representational birds lose their three-dimensional bodies and become fields in the background and then divisions on a flat page. In addition, Escher fancifully flattens out the turning world onto a two-dimensional surface.

The second stage of Stephen's theory illustrates steps our own perceptual mechanisms go through when we encounter the tricks in an Escher print. If the artist has, as Stephen says, "disentangle[d] the subtle soul of the image from its mesh of defining circumstances most exactly and ⟨⟨re-embod[ied]⟩⟩ it in artistic circumstances chosen as the most exact for it in its new office" (*SH*, p. 78), we ought to experience an epiphany.

In separating figure from ground in *Waterfall* (Fig. 2),[7] we naively associate the scene with conventional waterwheels and with water that is running downhill. At this very moment our minds are illustrating the second stage: "The mind considers the object in whole and in part, in relation to itself and to other objects, examines the balance of its parts, contemplates the form of the object, travels every cranny of the structure" (*SH*, p. 212). When we concentrate for any length of time, we recognize a shocking paradox: looking at any given corner confirms that the water is indeed running downhill, but tracing the path of the water proves undeniably that it has been running uphill. The jolt we receive from seeing this paradox—the involuntary smile it evokes—feels very like an epiphany. This is Stephen's explanation of epiphany:

> Now for the third quality. For a long time I couldn't make out what Aquinas meant. He uses a figurative word . . . but I have solved it. *Claritas* is *quidditas*. After the analysis which discovers the second quality the mind makes the only logically possible synthesis and discovers the third quality. This is the moment which I call epiphany. (*SH*, p. 213)

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"Mak[ing] the only logically possible synthesis" is part of the appeal—the delayed gratification—we associate with a print such as *Waterfall* (Fig. 2). Realizing we have been tricked by the movement of the water, we remap the visual field, retracing the labyrinth to see at what point our eyes and brains have been led astray. We discover that

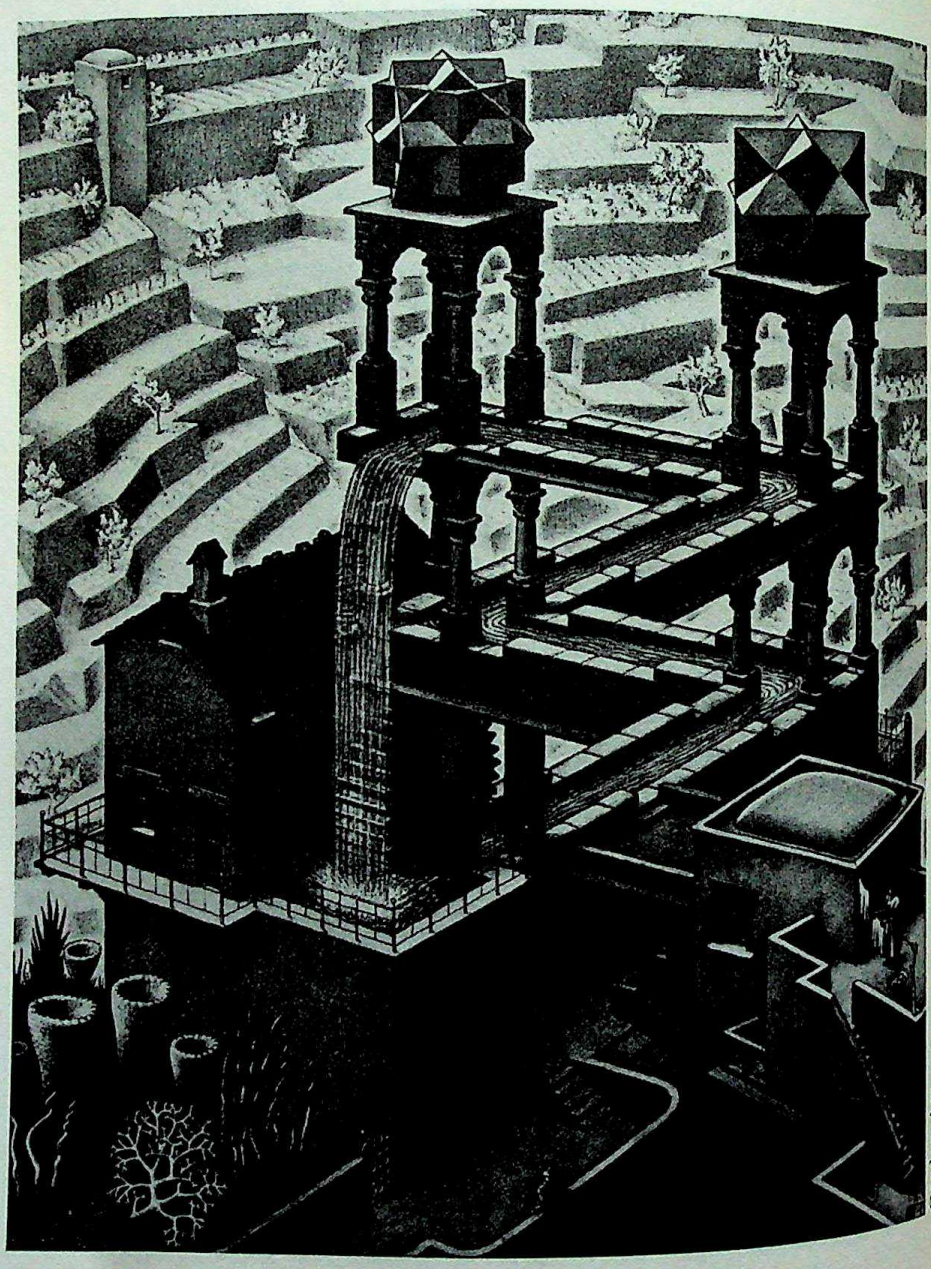

Fig. 2 Waterfall

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our learned responses have caused us to make some invalid assumptions. The intricacies of those figures atop the towers, of the terraces in the background, of the steps and even the cogs on the waterwheels, not to mention the intricacy of those fantastic plants, all beguile the viewer into trusting that what seems to be the most simple element of the picture—the path that water takes, flowing downhill—is indeed realistic. We have assumed that because the bricks outlining the troughs proceed downward like steps and because each trough appears to carry the water lower, water will be lower still at the end of the course than it was at the beginning.

Such simple notions as "end" and "beginning" work in a world of forthright Euclidian geometry—but not in the world Escher creates by distorting a three-dimensional figure on the flat plane of a piece of paper. If one imagines that he is holding the print in front of himself and tilting the top of the sheet away, he can visualize the plane that cuts through all six corners, recognizing that Escher was elaborating on the figure called the impossible triangle. It is helpful to imagine, superimposed over the waterfall, an early version of the impossible triangle (Fig. 3),[8] a two-dimensional representation of what appear to be square beams resting upon each other at right angles. We see that his study includes four triangles, whereas *Waterfall* includes three, the right-hand triangle being eliminated. Another epiphany occurs. Synthesizing our observations has allowed us a glimpse of ourselves seeing.

In *Dubliners*[9] we have a clear example of Joyce tricking us with a structural pattern in the same way Escher does visually. When we finish "Two Gallants," the epiphany is ours and not the protagonist's. We must retrace the labyrinth of behavior in the Dublin streets in order to realize shockingly that we have been voyeurs like Lenehan, anxiously trying to discover the way in which Corley is exploiting the young woman.

This active viewing and reviewing is the prime characteristic of the work of both Joyce and Escher: it is not only the form but the content as well. Escher shows us that moving back to the second stage jars us into another epiphany of recognition, demonstrating a reverberating loop.

In *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* Hofstadter explains this circular movement, calling it the "Strange Loop," or an endless process represented in a finite way: the "phenomenon occurs whenever, by moving upwards (or downwards) through the levels of some hierarchical system [such as *Waterfall* (Fig. 2)], we unexpectedly find ourselves right back where we started. . . ."[10] In fact, Hofstadter uses

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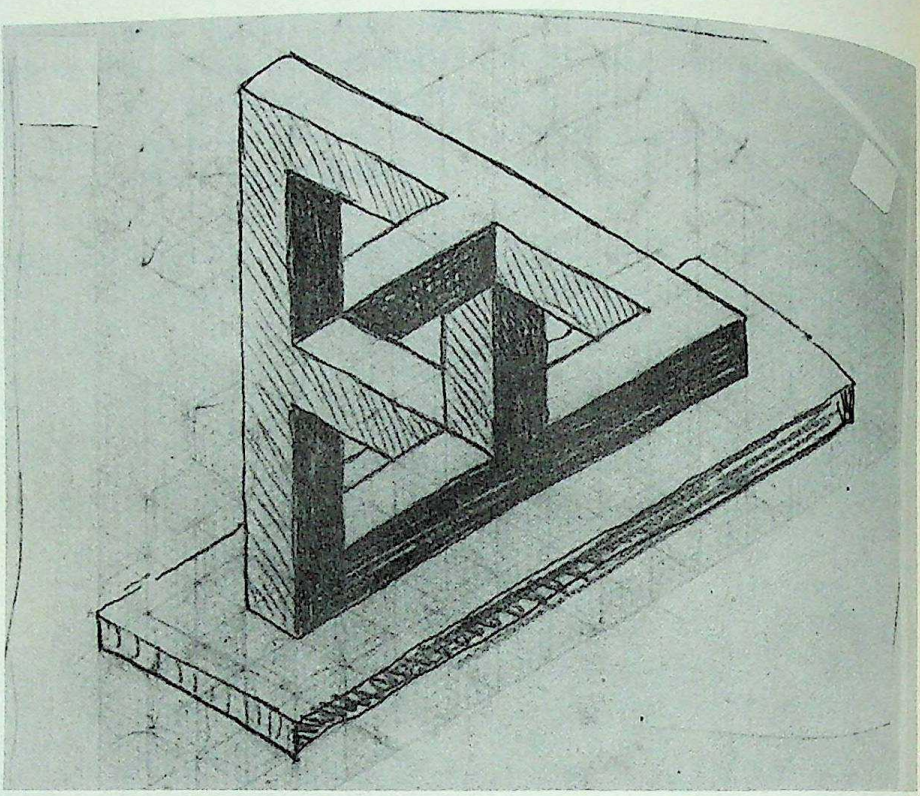

Fig. 3 The Impossible Triangle

Waterfall to show that Escher creates "the most beautiful and powerful visual realization of this notion of Strange Loops" and uses *Three Spheres II* (Fig. 4) and *Magic Mirror* (Fig. 5) to show that this loop can illustrate the movement of the self-referential artist.

This image of a loop helps in contrasting the most characteristic direction in which Escher and Joyce each directed his energies. For Escher this pattern was primarily a framework with which he could analyze the function of the artist at work. Joyce, by nature a navel-gazer, used the loop framework in a different way. Fascinated by Giambattista Vico's cyclic theory and its slowly ascending spiral or vortex, Joyce found the loop a convenient structure to step onto, in his moving Daedalean fashion outside himself and his work. Ultimately both Joyce and Escher stand outside their media, like gods paring their fingernails, seeing their material objectively while being seen participating in the process of creation.

The sequence of Joyce's works demonstrates his movement outside his fiction, from the retracing of naturalistic labyrinths that lead to an

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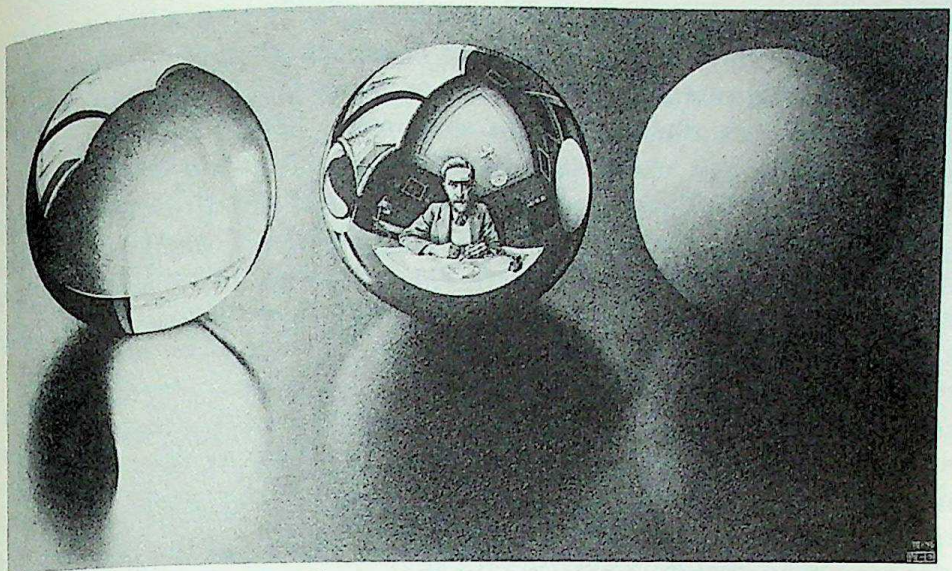

Fig. 4 Three Spheres II (Photograph by courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.)

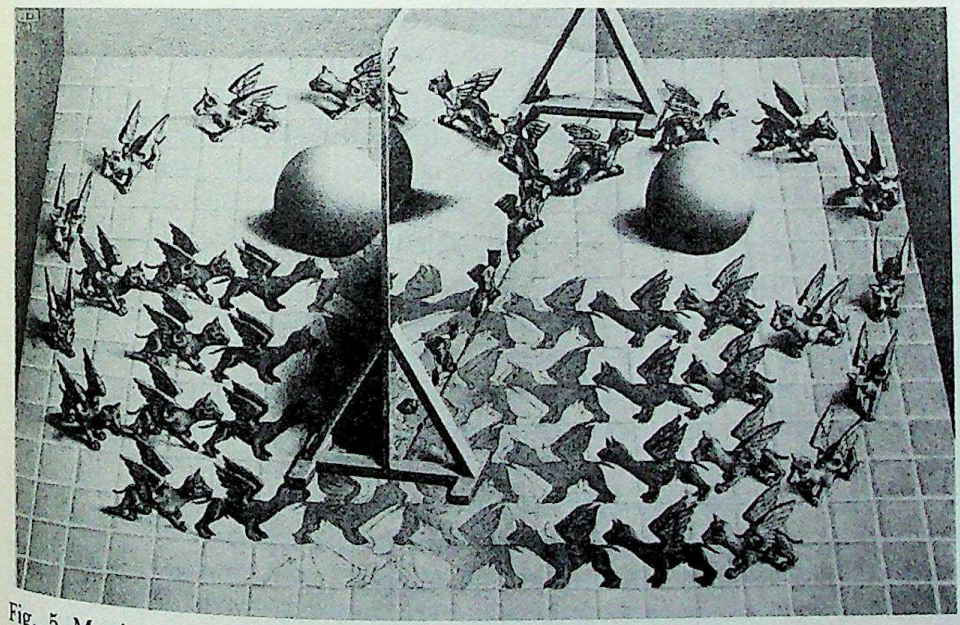

Fig. 5 Magic Mirror (Photograph by courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.)

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epiphany in each story in *Dubliners,* through the objectification of the diary in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*[11] and the newspaper headlines and catechism questions and answers in *Ulysses,* to the total distance of the multilingual puns in *Finnegans Wake.*

While we talk about Joyce's willingness to reflect his own image very distinctly in his work, leaving it stamped there, Escher playfully carries the idea a step further by making his literal reflection the focus of a number of graphics such as *Three Spheres II* (Fig. 4). Escher's playfulness should remind us that Joyce's title *A Portrait* was itself originally a borrowing from another medium.

In *Three Spheres II* notice the framed world, or fictive window, contains three worlds with varying surfaces that reflect in the writing table. But the writing table is reflected only in the middle mirror-like sphere, which reflects the whole surrounding area. The left-hand sphere, glass filled with water, reflects and magnifies the table top, the reflecting sphere, and the window. It reflects not only the window on its left side but also the window reflection from the middle sphere's reflection. The reflection of the artist drawing every detail is distorted only in the mirror-like sphere. All these surfaces, like the surface of Wordsworth's lake in *The Prelude,* are mirrors of the artist's mind or of memories in the artist's mind. Notice that the very center of the print is between the artist's eyes, at the still dead center of the artist's ego.

Joyce's early works reflect in part portraits of himself: the Stephen of *Stephen Hero* is more like Joyce than the Stephen of *A Portrait* and *Ulysses.* R. P. Blackmur points out that the actions of Stephen and Bloom in *Ulysses* "suggest a single picture . . . the picture of Joyce, working out the polarities of his own nature. . . ."[12] Moreover, throughout Joyce's work his reflections become less personal and more abstract. His signatures are contained in his language, his style (irony and juxtaposition), his form, even his typography. In *Ulysses* Joyce inserts a labyrinth of analysis between his reader and his characters. The newspaper headlines in "Aeolus" and the chapter-long sentence in "Penelope" tease us into focusing on the black marks covering the page and on the elaborate pyrotechnics being set off in our heads.

The form and typography of the novel are especially significant because they help us recognize the way characters not only reflect sides of Joyce's personality, or reflect real people, but reflect ideas. The most playful of these signs placed between character and reader comes at the end of "Ithaca" in the 1922 edition. Gifford and Seidman explain the reason for the "large black dot or period at the end of Episode 17, 722

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(737). A dot or period is a conventional sign for Q.E.D. (Latin: *quod erat demonstrandum,* 'which was to be proved')."[13]

The most problematic signs are the majuscule letters S-M-P, which, in Bennett Cerf's 1934 American edition, introduce the three parts of the novel corresponding to the Homeric structure that Joyce discussed with Stuart Gilbert. Cerf's use of typography merely makes more vivid—more graphic—the logical pattern ingrained in Joyce's mind by the Jesuits. In 1959 William York Tindall linked the letters to the signs for the three terms of a syllogism: "Innocent of meaning, decorative in purpose, the enlargement of these initials in the American edition is a lucky accident, calling attention to what might have been missed."[14] Editor and critic illuminate another level of the labyrinth of tradition as they participate in the text. These initial letters at the beginning of the three-part structure resonate with the illuminated manuscripts with which Joyce would have been familiar. Letters have come to represent the protagonists and the content of their minds: Part I (The Telemachiad) begins with S for Stephen, preoccupied with himself; Part II (The Wanderings of Ulysses) begins with M for Molly, who occupies Bloom's pattern of thought; Part III (The Homecoming) begins with P for Poldy or Leopold, who occupies Molly's reverie.[15]

Carrying Tindall's commentary forward in *Notes for Joyce* (1974), Gifford and Seidman emphasize Joyce's preoccupation with medieval pedagogy, which

> regarded the sequence S-M-P [subject, middle, predicate] as the cognitive order of thought and therefore as the order in which the terms initially should be taught. . . . The analogue of the syllogism (as the overall analogue to *The Odyssey*) suggests a logical and narrative structure, which the reader can grasp but of which the characters in the fiction are essentially unaware.[16]

Joyce's use of that orb at the end of "Ithaca" and his acceptance of those larger-than-life capital letters in the 1934 American edition, become an elaborate joke not only on the characters and the readers but on the creation of stories, a joke that resurrects Aristotle and Aquinas.

Escher's creatures in *Magic Mirror* (Fig. 5) help us visualize the way Joyce manipulates characters inside the world of *Ulysses* and readers outside it. Escher uses his metamorphosing creatures to comment on the relationship of image to object. When they loop back toward the front of the mirror, they become spaces in a figure-and-ground grid or tiled floor. They appear to loop under the mirror, rather than through it. The figures we see marching in the upper-right corner are reflected twice: once on the flat, presumably opaque surface of the mirror, and

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again—through the mirror—in the figures we see marching in the upper-left corner. That mirror is a fictive window, one that both reflects and is seen through; we see the mirror and the surrounding figures through a larger fictive window, which corresponds to the pupil of Escher's eye—which has become our own.

Joyce's creatures are in comparable states of materializing and dematerializing. *Ulysses* is a study of a similar interaction between the flat and the spatial; flat, static black marks come to life, in the medium of writing a story and reading it, instead of drawing objects and perceiving images. Here Joyce gives us numerous perspectives simultaneously, as we have seen Escher doing in *Day and Night* and doing more thoroughly in *Magic Mirror*. Joyce uses the mirror of language to construct reverberating loops through which we can trace the corporeality of the characters at various discrete stages, from realistic people using romantic language, in the early chapters, to two-dimensional vehicles for ideas: psyches in "Circe," clichés in "Eumaeus," and Aquinas-like rhetorical patterns of questions and answers in "Ithaca." By the last chapter Molly has metamorphosed from being an idea, or bits and chips of memory in people's minds, into being a creature of flesh and blood—with emphasis on the flesh.

Joyce also uses mirrors as fictive windows to achieve metamorphosis, merging, and simultaneity, most notably in the sifting of subconscious material in "Circe." For example, when Bloom first enters Nighttown, we see him, like the figures in *Magic Mirror*, creating a "composite portrait,"[17] reflected in concave and convex mirrors. The scene, Bloom watching himself as an element in the surrounding streets, is absorbed and reflected by "Gillen's hairdresser's windows" (XV:144). Flat, concave, and convex mirrors clustered tightly together create a cacophony of images that reflect and overlap, even as they penetrate the planes of glass. The reader sees external and internal realities merge and sees beneath the ego into the libido. A concave mirror in the window reveals the psychic pain of Bloom's tortured ego—"lovelorn longlost lugubru Blooloohoom"; then when his eye catches a convex mirror, it draws out his animal joy—"fatchuck cheekchops of jollypoldy the rixdix doldy" (XV:145–49).

Immediately after Bloom has watched himself be cuckolded by Boylan, Bloom's and Stephen's fantasies coincide in an epiphany for the first time when they simultaneously look into Bella's mirror and see not each other but themselves revealed in Shakespeare. The three "men of letters" are "*crowned by the reflection of the reindeer antlered hatrack in the hall*" (XV:3823–24). The magic mirror takes in the reflections of the

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two men and feeds them back with the image of Shakespeare to boot, creating a cycle or loop.

This mirror, like many of Escher's, is permeable: we see Stephen and Bloom moving through it in "Circe" and recognize that they are on the other side of it in "Ithaca," just as Escher's creatures live magically in two worlds—the world of reality reflected in the mirror and that other world beyond the back side of the mirror.

I have used Escher's illuminated moments as visual analogues to help us see more clearly Joyce's concepts about artistic perception and process. Each artist analyzes portraits of the artist and his archetypal struggles. For Joyce a work of art is, according to Marshall McLuhan, the "process of retrieval, of reconstruction after a moment of insight."[18] Wordsworth and the Romantics, and the symbolists, prepared the ground for Joyce and for the "vivisections" he describes in *Stephen Hero,* vivisections of the artist's mind in action—the drama of cognition.

Illustrations for this essay were provided through a grant from the Research and Publication Fund of Wake Forest University.

[1] Marshall McLuhan uses this term, the drama of cognition, in "James Joyce: Trivial and Quadrivial," in *The Interior Landscape: The Literary Criticism of Marshall McLuhan 1943–1962,* ed. Eugene McNamara (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), p. 32: "For it is in the drama of cognition, the stages of apprehension, that Joyce found the archetype of poetic imitation. He seems to have been the first to see that the dance of being, the nature imitated by the arts, has its primary analogue in the activity of the exterior and interior senses."

[2] M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: Norton, 1971), p. 543. Leaving the debate on why Joyce stopped using the term "epiphany" and on how broadly to define "epiphanies" and their predecessors to a future discussion, I rely on Abrams' liberal definitions of the recurrent illuminations Wordsworth called "spots of time" and Joyce called "epiphanies."

[3] James Joyce, *Stephen Hero* (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1963), p. 211. Subsequent references are found in the text, cited as *SH.*

[4] Joyce's understanding of poetic process benefited, according to Marshall McLuhan, from Aquinas, William Wordsworth, and the Symbolists: Poe, Baudelaire, Flaubert, Rimbaud, Mallarmé. Joyce's statement in *Stephen Hero* that Stephen's "Esthetic was in the main <<applied Aquinas>>" was so literal he had to scrap it (p. 77). In a postcard to his brother Stanislaus, Joyce makes his connection with Wordsworth clear: "I think Wordsworth of all Englishmen of letters best deserves your word 'genius.'" *Letters,* 11 June 1905, ed. Richard Ellmann (London: Faber, 1966), p. 63.

[5] Douglas R. Hofstadter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* (New York: Vintage, 1980), p. 10.

[6] F. H. Bool, et al., *M. C. Escher: His Life and Complete Graphic Work,* trans.

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Tony Langham and Plym Peters (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982), cat. no. 303. Figures 4–5, cat. no., respectively: 339, 338.

[7] *The World of M. C. Escher,* ed. J. L. Locher (New York: Abrams, 1971), prints 253 or 257.

[8] *Ibid.,* print 250.

[9] James Joyce, *Dubliners* (New York: Viking, 1958).

[10] Hofstadter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach,* p. 10.

[11] James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (New York: Viking, 1956). Subsequent references are shortened to *A Portrait.*

[12] R. P. Blackmur, "The Jew in Search of a Son," *Virginia Quarterly Review,* 24 (1948), 115; rpt. in *Eleven Essays on the European Novel* (New York: Harcourt, 1984), p. 46.

[13] Don Gifford with Robert J. Seidman, *Notes for Joyce: An Annotation of James Joyce's* Ulysses (New York: Dutton, 1974), p. 2.

[14] William York Tindall, *A Reader's Guide to James Joyce* (New York: Farrar, 1959), p. 126 f. Bennett Cerf's *At Random* says almost nothing about his publication of *Ulysses.* H. K. Croessmann, however, in "Joyce, Gorman, and the Schema of *Ulysses:* An Exchange of Letters—Paul L. Léon, Herbert Gorman, Bennett Cerf," publishes letters that dramatize the jealously guarded schema (*A James Joyce Miscellany,* Second Series, ed. Marvin Magalaner [Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1959], p. 9.).

[15] See Tindall, *A Reader's Guide to James Joyce,* p. 126.

[16] Gifford and Seidman, *Notes for Joyce,* p. 2.

[17] James Joyce, *Ulysses: A Critical and Synoptic Edition,* ed. Hans Walter Gabler (New York: Garland, 1984), XV:144. Subsequent references are found in the text.

[17] Eugene McNamara, "Preface" to *The Interior Landscape,* p. vii.

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The Public and Private Realms of Hill's *Mercian Hymns*

David Lloyd

In his essay "Poetry and Politics"—the lead piece of a recent *TriQuarterly* special issue—Terrence Des Pres makes a call for poets to produce writing "strong enough to handle history and not stay cowed within the halting world of self." Des Pres values poetry "not so much grounded in ideology as in the concrete reactions of men and women who find themselves in history's path."[1] Since the 1970s a number of British poets have begun producing works growing out of rootedness in a particular locality's history, topography, and mythology. Dissatisfied with discrete lyrics bounded by Des Pres' "halting world of self," these poets—including Irishman Seamus Heaney, Scotsman George MacKay Brown, Welshman R. S. Thompson, and Englishman Jeremy Hooker—have been working on extended structures: sequences and narratives focusing on history, culture, and politics. Among English poets today, Geoffrey Hill, in his sequence *Mercian Hymns,* has gone furthest toward placing the self within the historical and political life of his or her culture.[2] Even though *Mercian Hymns* weaves in material from Hill's personal experience, the self does not exist in isolation in the sequence. Instead, the various speakers of these hymns[3] interact with past and present elements of English culture. Hill achieves this interaction by creating an idiom that allows a public voice to take on the intensity and immediacy of a private consciousness, and a private voice to gain the breadth, resonance, and authority of a public persona.

Mercian Hymns is a record of the growth of a poet's mind[4] and of the development of a culture. It is a self-portrait, particularly of Hill as a child growing up in England in the 1940s; but it is also a portrait of a potent British myth: Offa, the king who stands at the beginnings of

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English nationhood. As the most powerful Anglo-Saxon king of England before Alfred of Wessex, Offa was instrumental in forging a national identity among the early English.[5] Essentially a single poetic technique—the unearthing and examining of fragments of memory—creates both the private and the public portraits in Hill's sequence. While Offa is a historical figure, the relics of his rule are meager—a few coins, the remnants of his dyke against the Welsh, and some fragmentary contemporary references. As a subject, Offa therefore does not lock Hill into a great number of constraining facts and dates. Besides allowing Hill special entrance into the history and cultural life of the British West Midlands—where Hill spent his childhood—Offa is an enigmatic figure, and thus a fit subject for Hill's poetic sensibility, which has consistently found expression in a language of paradox, irony, and modernist complexity.

When commenting on the "power" of Swift's poetry to "move with fluent rapidity from private to public utterance and from the formal to the intimate in the space of a few lines,"[6] Hill could well be speaking of *Mercian Hymns*. As he appears in Hill's sequence, Offa might be described as a fluid mixture of private and public attributes. His character sometimes combines elements of Hill's life and consciousness (mostly his childhood years), with what we know of the historical Offa, but he also sometimes includes the public elements of legends, traditions, historical forces, and the environment or topography of the British West Midlands, site of the ancient kingdom of Mercia. *Mercian Hymns* opens with a voice singing or chanting for King Offa a list of sometimes incongruous and anachronistic titles or accolades, many of which derive from West Midlands topography. In Hymn I, "The Naming of Offa," Hill uses colons so that one accolade generates the next:

> King of the perennial holly-groves, the riven sandstone: overlord of the M5: architect of the historic rampart and ditch, the citadel at Tamworth, the summer hermitage at Holy Cross: guardian of the Welsh Bridge and the Iron Bridge: contractor to the desirable new estates: saltmaster: moneychanger: commissioner for oaths: martyrologist: the friend of Charlemagne.
>
> 'I liked that,' said Offa, 'sing it again.'

Both the content and the overall tone of the opening stanza identify the speaker as a scop of the dark ages, who would traditionally sing a king's praises.[7] In subsequent hymns, however, we hear a variety

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of different speakers, including the voice of an adult (whom we might identify as Hill) remembering his childhood (III), an unidentified modern observer (XXI), King Offa (VIII), and, in at least one hymn, a figure who can definitely be identified as Hill himself (XXV). But the speakers are much more complex than these sample categories would indicate. The scop of Hymn I mentions a twentieth-century creation, the M5 superhighway, and so cannot be purely a scop of the eighth century; the adult remembering his childhood in wartime Britain of the 1940s uses a diction that brings to mind Anglo-Saxon battle literature, and other modern voices show attitudes and speak phrases one associates with the eighth century; most obviously, King Offa many times speaks and acts in this sequence like a twentieth-century man. It is largely through the sequence's peculiar mixture of idioms that Hill achieves interaction between the public world of historical events and the private world of individual relationships in contemporary time.

History in *Mercian Hymns* is not chronological; instead, the present moment is enriched by all the past simultaneously. From the first hymn, the events of Mercia over the last twelve centuries are never treated as a linear development: there are no pure "moments" of history. Hill shifts freely between historical periods as well as between public and private experience. Three poems in the sequence—Hymn III ("The Crowning of Offa"), Hymn XI ("Offa's Kingdom"), and Hymn XXV ("Opus Anglicanum")—provide good examples of Hill's use of this strategy.

Hymn III, "The Crowning of Offa," describes a group of twentieth-century English children let out of school to celebrate the coronation of a King, probably George VI, who was crowned in 1937, when Hill was five years old:

> On the morning of the crowning we chorused our re-
> mission from school. It was like Easter: hankies
> and gift-mugs approved by his foreign gaze, the
> village lintels curlered with paper flags.
>
> We gaped at the car-park of 'The Stag's Head' where a
> bonfire of beer-crates and holly-boughs whistled
> above the tar. And the chef stood there, a king in
> his new-risen hat, sealing his brisk largesse with
> 'any mustard?'

While the scene is obviously set in modern England, certain details—the ritualistic bonfire, the holly-boughs (associated with English landscape and folklore from very early times), the chef-king's "sealing his brisk largesse," and the hymn's title ("The Crowning of Offa")—all point back to archaic ceremonies. It is these flickerings from the past that cause us

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to hear characteristics of a chronicler or historian in a voice we initially identify as a modern adult describing a childhood memory. When describing his people's most important ritual, their King's coronation, the speaker of Hymn III begins to echo the scop's voice we heard in Hymn I.

Hill initially seems to deflate the ancient, once vital ritual by humorously "crowning" the chef at the pub and by placing the events in a modern environment where crowds sentimentally wave hankies, merchants peddle tacky, stenciled gift-mugs, and the celebratory bonfire is fueled by beer-crates burning on tar. For the children, recess from school for the occasion is a "remission," as from an illness, and they are much more fascinated by the chef than by the real king, who is physically removed from them, a "foreign" presence. The children see the chef's "largesse" of generous mustard on a sandwich as more relevant to their lives than any largesse offered by a real king. Yet while the speaker may at first seem to be using echoes of archaic rituals to compare a glorious past with a degraded present (as in many of the historical references of Pound and Eliot), we should recall that the hymn's setting is the car-park of "The Stag's Head" pub and that pubs are primary centers of social, communal life in modern England.

In a sense, the speaker of Hymn III portrays an actual, viable community ceremony, substituting the pub for the mead hall—and that substitution is not fully ironic. Instead, the interaction of past and present in this hymn highlights a cultural continuity that Hill celebrates throughout *Mercian Hymns*. The chef parallels the chief, or "ring-giver," of the Anglo-Saxon mead hall: both distribute "largesse" to their people amid drinking and eating. It is because the speaker of Hymn III embodies public and private experience that he is able to mediate between ancient and modern coronation rituals.

The speaker of Hymn XXI, "The Kingdom of Offa," fuses ancient border battles and the excursions of some West Midlands tourists to Wales:

> Cohorts of charabancs fanfared Offa's province and
> his concern, negotiating the by-ways from Teme
> to Trent. Their windshields dripped butterflies.
> Stranded on hilltops they signalled with plumes
> of steam. Twilight menaced the land. The young
> women wept and surrendered.
>
> Still, everyone was cheerful, heedless in such days:
> at summer weekends dipping into valleys beyond
> Mercia's dyke. Tea was enjoyed, by lakesides where

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all might fancy carillons of real Camelot vibrating through the silent water.

Gradually, during the years, deciduous velvet peeled from evergreen albums and during the years more treasures were mislaid: the harp-shaped brooches, the nuggets of fool's gold.

On one level the action is mundane: busloads of tourists are driven to Wales on summer weekends, their buses overheating on the mountainous roads and breaking down. They sightsee, drink tea, fantasize about the misty Celtic past of Camelot and King Arthur, and finally return to England with souvenirs and new pictures for old photo albums. But this speaker's language, heavy with archaic military double entendres, conjures up suggestions of eighth-century military forays from Offa's kingdom, beyond the dyke, to enemy Wales.

The first word of the Hymn, "cohorts," can refer either to a group of companions, such as the tourists, or to a military unit, a "cohort." When the sightseeing buses, or "charabancs," overheat, the tourists signal "with plumes / of steam," as if using a military code. Also, these buses *fanfared* Offa's Mercia: a word accurately describing the movements of modern sightseeing buses, yet also denoting a flourish of trumpets in an ostentatious military display. More wordplay of this nature occurs at the end of the first stanza, when the young women losing their virginity "wept and surrendered." The language carries on the military parallel established by the preceding sentences, making those women the traditional spoils of Dark Ages warfare. Once again the speaker's language does not simply create a contrast between public and private experience, or between a glorious, heroic past and a diminished present: the emotional upheaval accompanying the contemporary young women's first experience of love is not diminished or ridiculed, but subtly acknowledged.

The multiple meanings conveyed by the language in this section yield deflation and satire, as in the description of tourists bringing "treasures" back from Wales: "the harp-shaped brooches, / the nuggets of fool's gold"—not valuable booty of course but tacky souvenirs from modern Welsh tourist shops. It is not only the English tourists who are satirized, however: by linking the eighth-century military forays with tourist excursions, those forays are themselves portrayed not as heroic adventures but petty, treasure-seeking aggressions.

Besides the comedy and satire, Hymn XXI also reveals a continuity or commonality of attitude that blends the apparently different excursions of the eighth and twentieth centuries. Tourist bus

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expeditions to Wales constitute a kind of cultural attack which, if less brutal than Offa's invasions, is ultimately more destructive. Offa's eighth-century attitude toward Wales as a land to be exploited for cattle and slaves finds its modern equivalent in the attitude of "heedless" tourists "dipping into the Welsh valleys." While we initially respond to a perceived distance between the poem's language and its ostensible subject—tourism—we later see that the language is in one sense not ironically distant from, but appropriate to, its subject. Hill is serious in asserting that the predatory nature of Offa's border raids lives on in the excursions of Birmingham and Wolverhampton tourists to the Welsh valleys.

The speaker of Hymn XXV, "Opus Anglicanum," differs from the speakers of Hymns III and XXI in that he can be identified with Hill himself. While the poem serves as an elegy for Hill's grandmother, it also uses literary and historical references to charge the poem politically, creating an impassioned attack on industrial exploitation and its human cost:

> Brooding on the eightieth letter of *Fors Clavigera,*
> I speak this in memory of my grandmother, whose
> childhood and prime womanhood were spent in the
> nailer's darg.
>
> The nailshop stood back of the cottage, by the fold.
> It reeked stale mineral sweat. Sparks had furred
> its low roof. In dawn-light the troughed water
> floated a damson-bloom of dust—
>
> not to be shaken by posthumous clamour. It is one
> thing to celebrate the 'quick forge', another
> to cradle a face hare-lipped by the searing wire.
>
> Brooding on the eightieth letter of *Fors Clavigera,*
> I speak this in memory of my grandmother, whose
> childhood and prime womanhood were spent in the
> nailer's darg.

The precise language and understatement do not belie the speaker's outrage; instead, they allow the reader to grasp the intensity of that outrage. In a similar way the repetition of the first stanza (a strategy occurring nowhere else in the sequence) provides a subjective context for the two stanzas in the middle and reinforces the speaker's emotional urgency.

In addition to providing a personal tribute to the life and sufferings of Hill's grandmother, Hymn XXV undertakes a far-

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reaching indictment of the nineteenth-century capitalist celebration of industrialization, the "quick forge" which resulted in profitable exploitation of the British working classes. Hill introduces this cultural criticism through the literary reference in the first line: "Brooding on the eightieth letter of *Fors Clavigera*. . . ." The explanatory note to this line refers the reader to John Ruskin's "Letter 80" of *Fors Clavigera,* where Ruskin describes two women "nailing"—laboring with hammer, pincers, and anvil: "Four strokes with the hammer in the hand; one ponderous and momentary blow ordered of the balanced mass by the touch of the foot." Ruskin explains that the women labored from "seven to seven—by the furnace side" for eight shillings a week.[8] Overall, "Letter 80" presents a condemnation of what Ruskin calls "the main British modern idea that the master and his men should belong to two entirely different classes . . . the one, on the whole, living in hardship—the other in ease . . . ."[9] Hill's careful use of literary allusion infuses the elegy with the historical context of industrial exploitation in nineteenth-century England, broadening the poem's reference and transforming Hill's private grief into public outcry. This brief hymn captures a moment when historical circumstances impinge, through a written source, on a private consciousness.

Hill's epigraph to the English edition of *Mercian Hymns* is a quotation from poet and critic C. H. Sisson. (This epigraph does not occur in the American edition of Hill's earlier works, *Somewhere Is Such a Kingdom,* which includes *Mercian Hymns*.) One portion of the epigraph asserts that "The conduct of government rests upon the same foundation and encounters the same difficulties as the conduct of private persons: that is, as to its object and justification. . . . " The prominent position given the Sisson quotation reveals that from the outset Hill's sequence will treat "samenesses" between government, politics, and history and private, contemporary experience.

In an article first delivered as a lecture, then published in *Poetry Nation Review,* Hill expressed admiration for Sisson as a poet and as "an administrator of public 'practical affairs' at a high level of accomplishment and responsibility as a principal under-secretary in the Ministry of Labour." Hill's discussion in part focuses on what he terms Sisson's "distinct anti-solipsistic bias, if 'solipsism' is the 'theory that self is the only object of real knowledge' *(OED)*":

> [Sisson] has said: "It is too readily supposed that there is a 'personal experience' which can be conveyed in words. In fact, the consciousness we have is a product of history . . . . When it

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> comes to the feelings of a woman abandoned by her lover, the whole force of a civilization is in play."[10] (Hill's ellipses)

Going on to paraphrase Sisson, Hill comments:

> Our personal experience is not pure experience; it is acted upon by various contingents, of some of which we may be ignorant. Among the least acknowledged of these contingent powers are those of language, and of history effective through the language that we know, the language of which we are capable.[11]

Hill's paraphrase of Sisson suggests the primary structuring technique of *Mercian Hymns*: in these poems, contemporary personal experience is infused with the "contingent powers . . . of language and of history effective through language." *Mercian Hymns* strives to set the private consciousness against and within "the whole force of a civilization."

By merging private and public realms, *Mercian Hymns* asserts that very archaic elements of history and myth underpin and partially direct the consciousness or cultural life of the twentieth-century English individual. While escaping the "halting world of self," Hill explores a great variety of experience in *Mercian Hymns*—the past, the present, mundane actions, heroic actions, private memories, public ritual—in an effort to understand the direction his culture has taken since the concept of English nationhood first emerged during King Offa's rule. Imperial privilege, economic oppression, and the use of violence to achieve political or economic ends—to cite a few thematic threads of *Mercian Hymns*—form a pattern in English history from Anglo-Saxon to modern times. In Hill's West Britain, valued ancient rituals and ceremonies persist, and contemporary men and women can feel deeply connected to the inherited communal life as they can to their region's distinctive topography and language. But while celebrating the close-woven tapestry of elements that persist down the centuries to form the entity "Mercia," Hill yet attacks destructive forms of human behavior which also form part of that tapestry.

[1] Terrence Des Pres, "Poetry and Politics," *TriQuarterly*, 65 (1986), 17–18.

[2] Geoffrey Hill, *Mercian Hymns* (London: André Deutsch, 1971).

[3] Throughout this essay I shall refer to Hill's prose-poems as "hymns."

[4] In his "Introduction" to Hill's *Somewhere Is Such a Kingdom* (Boston: Houghton, 1975), Harold Bloom comments that "*Mercian Hymns* is a kind of Prelude-in-little" (p. xxii).

[5] F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

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Stenton observes that "the re-establishment of Mercian supremacy by Offa is the central fact in English history in the second half of the eighth century" (p. 210).

[6] Geoffrey Hill, *The Lords of Limit: Essays on Literature and Ideas* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1984), p. 68.

[7] Charles Tomlinson pointed out (in conversation, 17 Apr. 1985) that Hill has sung this first hymn at poetry readings.

[8] John Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera* (London: George Allen, 1907), XXII, 174.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 172.

[10] Geoffrey Hill, "C. H. Sisson," *Poetry Nation Review*, 39 (1984), 11–12.

[11] *Ibid.*

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The Fortunate Fall: Three Actions in *The Bell*

David W. Beams

At the high-minded Anglican lay community Imber Court, in Iris Murdoch's *The Bell* (1958), two outsiders are responsible for discovering in Imber Lake, and secretly raising from its depths, the medieval bell that had, according to legend, belonged to Imber Abbey but, when one of the nuns took a lover and the Abbey was placed under a curse, flew out of its tower into the lake. The faithless nun drowned herself, and legend has it that the tolling of a bell in the lake portends a death.[1] The two outsiders are a graceful, cheerful, innocent boy Toby Gashe, whose natural goodness and receptivity (particularly to the natural outdoors world at Imber) contrast somewhat with the studied, willed disciplines of the Imber Court brotherhood; and a much more incongruous visitor, Dora Greenfield, the classically errant wife of an art historian working at Imber. In the upright, effortful, doctrinaire company at the Court Dora appears morally tarnished and erratic after the manner of the fallen nun herself.

Joyously drenched in the sun, entering the cool ecstasy of the water, lithely swimming and exploring under the lake, the humble and happy Toby detects the sunken bell. And at the behest of the unhappy Dora, who knows the legend from her husband Paul, he engineers the raising of the bell, named "Gabriel." The memorable climax of this action is when, disavowing her original witchlike purpose of substituting the old bell for a new one shortly to be installed in the adjacent Imber Abbey, yielding to the still yet "living" presence and "spell" of the risen bell in the barn, feeling "reverence for it, almost love," Dora rings it because the "truth-telling voice . . . must not be silenced" (p. 289). The

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death portended by "Gabriel" is that of Christ on the Cross, by which all men condemned to death by original sin may yet live.

The bell is manifestly the central "symbol" of the novel, and in her new study of Iris Murdoch, Deborah Johnson attempts a corrective of the best known prior commentary on this symbol, by A. S. Byatt. Byatt says the bell is a "planted" rather than natural symbol; Dora's ringing of it is a "substitute for a real action in the real world. . . . Dora beats it to 'tell the truth'—but the truth she has to tell has nothing to do with the bell. The connexion is the novelist's."[2] Although Johnson, too, neglects the *whole* of the action (Toby immersed in the lake, his partnership with Dora, certain particulars *about* the bell), she quite correctly answers Byatt:

> The "connexion" between truth-telling and the ringing of the bell is, after all, Dora's as well as the novelist's. The ringing of the bell is only one of a number of *consciously* symbolic actions which Dora takes in an attempt to resolve her predicament in relation to her husband who doesn't respect her and to the Imber community by whom she feels casually judged.[3]

After the many chapters and articles on *The Bell,* Johnson's contribution is the "feminist subtext"[4] she finds in Dora's increasingly deeper moral self-affirmation, as in the ringing of the bell, her developing sense of identity and integrity despite the exclusive ethical absolutes of Imber Court and the severe model of chaste innocence it presents in the nun-to-be Catherine Fawley. The emotional and poetic feminist potentialities of this heroine Johnson sees already at the end of the first chapter when Dora, though she is, in the very act of returning to her husband Paul, incapable of arriving at Imber Court without yet another dereliction (she absent-mindedly leaves Paul's notebooks on the train), "unexpectedly releases into the sunlight a Red Admiral butterfly which she has rescued from the dusty floor of her railway compartment and forgotten about. The butterfly 'circled them for a moment and then fluttered across the sunlit platform and flew away into the distance. There was a moment's surprised silence.' "[5] Johnson quotes Walter Allen on how this passage " 'astonishes, enchants, liberates and enhances,' " telling more about Dora than any amount of analysis could do. She concludes, "In its liberating and enhancing symbolism and in its subtle yet insistent feminism *The Bell* still remains unsurpassed by Iris Murdoch's later fiction."[6]

Despite the literature on *The Bell,* the meaning of the novel has not been satisfactorily elicited; the time has come to make sense of the whole. In a story in which the context of Dora's self-discovery is the

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bountifully imagined lay religious community Imber Court, not to mention the more traditional Christianity of Imber Abbey, with Christian beliefs, ethical concepts, rituals, and symbols informing throughout, Dora's fulfillment as a woman is only a partial reading. But if we think of the erring first woman in Genesis we have a religious perspective on specifically feminine transgression, with Dora judged by something like the Old Testament Law at Imber *Court*. That is, we have the Fall as a motif. However, as Johnson shows, there is never a time when Dora is nothing *but* guilty. Already with the butterfly her exacting (and generally disappointed) husband has remarked, " 'You are full of novelties' " (p. 23).

The novelty Dora represents at Imber Court—and most paradoxically—is simply the *New* Testament, that sequel to the Fall in which the redeeming grace of Jesus Christ supplants the law, in which Baptism affords the access of grace in each fallen individual. Dora is fulfilled precisely in a Christian myth, for in raising and ringing the bell named "Gabriel" she is voicing the Annunciation, the reality—elided by the misguided Christians of Imber Court—of the *fortunate* fall (in the Easter liturgy, in Milton), of the Son of God become Man, of redeeming Love far transcending the innocence of Eden. As Adam says in *Paradise Lost:*

> O goodness infinite! Goodness immense
> That all this good of evil shall produce
> And evil turn to good . . . full of doubt I stand
> Where I should repent me now of sin
> By me done and occasioned, or rejoice
> Much more that much more good shall spring—
> To God more glory, more good will to men
> From God, and over wrath grace shall abound.[7]

Before summarizing what I consider the allegorical form of *The Bell* it is important to see exactly what Dora's "antagonist" at Imber Court is, of which her husband's reproaches and contempt are a component. To take one of many actions, Dora and Imber Court's leader Michael Meade in the woods come upon the slim, pale figure of the boy Toby at a pool, naked except for a sun hat, his body caressed by sun and shadow under a willow tree as with lanky grace he bends over the water. This harmonious pastoral vision brings a tremor of delight to Dora, who thinks now of herself as a "potentially desirable, potentially naked woman" (p. 80). But by contrast Michael's face wears a troubled look, and he quietly turns about and leads her back along the path by which they had come. " 'We'll go back the other way' " (p. 79). Dora's impulse to set a value on her instinctive experience and the natural world (and

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her incipient aesthetic perception, since the charmingly immature boy also reminds her of the David of Donatello) is turned back by the cheerlessness of some ineffable moral part she has to play.

The basic legalistic ethic of Imber Court is expressed in James Tayper Pace's sermon affirming that "'the good life does not amend the rules by the standards of this world'" but looks to God and to His Law; it does not vainly investigate the hidden wellsprings of sin in the moral personality, for the conception of personality is "'dangerous to goodness'" (p. 138). (Or, as Mrs. Mark says to Dora, who has picked some flowers: "'You see, we don't normally allow any sort of personal decoration in the rooms'" [p. 61].) Where there are "'more than enough rules to live by,'" the goal is to engage in right actions and "'what the rule enjoins'" (p. 139). James says it is then possible, beyond any foolish thought of the worth of "'experience,'" to protect and "'retain'" one's "'innocence,'" which has the simplicity and openness of a great bell bearing witness (p. 143).

Murdoch's critics have recognized here the ordinary-language man in her critique of linguistic moral philosophy. It is painful that the obvious Christian theological, doctrinal context has been less consulted by them. For here, from any authentically Christian point of view, we have the tragic fallacy from which the austerities at Imber Court issue in the cluster of disasters toward the end of the novel. Compare to James's sermon this passage from Galatians: "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. . . . I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."[8]

In one of the moments of rapture and plenitude associated with Toby—a "point of intersection of the timeless / With time . . . the moment in and out of time"[9]—the boy on the lakeside path hears the gay laughter of a nun from across the water, "as clear as a bell," and he is filled with "a sense of joy which seemed both physical and spiritual at the same time and almost lifted him off the ground. When one was so favored it was not difficult to be good," and he thinks of "grace. Not I but Christ in me" (p. 151).

Let us summarize a new and coherent reading of *The Bell*. The key to it is Michael Meade's sermon where he compares "the mechanism of our spiritual energy" to a bell. "'The swing that takes it down must also take it up'" (p. 219). The Christian and Miltonic paradox of *felix culpa*, though an idea explicit in the dialogue only once and in twisted and parodistic form, is the formal principle of *The Bell*. (The despairing Nick Fawley uses the expression in his sardonic "sermon" to Toby [p.

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278]; along with, of course, his unruly, outlaw personality and mocking actions, both his Christian and surname are integral to the myth of the Fall.) At Imber Court the good-looking boy Toby (*tobhiyyah*: God is good) first suggests prelapsarian innocence, as in the scene at the pool, the illusory form of Good Imber Court aspires to; but soon, moving from the shallow pool (where he is already "stirring up" mud [p.79]) to swim in the lake, he comes to embody the *reality* of Good posited by the novel. That is, he embodies *grace* as he dives underwater to find and raise the fallen bell—luminously realized actions of descent and rising, and the baptismal rite that has the same meaning. And secondly he embodies grace as, from the disturbing, sexually awakening attentions of Imber's leader Michael Meade (the "lake expert," p. 27), he observes the feminine Dora with a new interest and attaches himself to this morally unkempt outsider with whom he shares the secret of the bell and for whom he raises it. The alliance of Toby and Dora is a metaphor of the contingency of grace accruing to the apparently disheveled and irresolute.

Just as at the naturalistic level the guileless Toby undergoes an initiation or "fall," so his shifting relationship to Dora allegorizes the transfer or relocation of Good from the Imber Court dream of innocence to the moral energies of the fallen. The reality at Imber Court is not the cloister of innocence under the law but the lake, that is, the fallen world (Latin *imber*: by metonymy "water") from which issues the angel of the Annunciation, "Gabriel." Drawing on the Book of Tobit (Tobias and the angel), the seraphic youth of Plato, and, in Nick Fawley, on the Nickelmann in Hauptmann's *Die versunkene Glocke*, and especially on the hint half-guessed, the gift half-understood, in "Four Quartets"[10]—with its "sea bell's / Perpetual angelus"[11]—*The Bell* is a parable of Incarnation or the "fortunate fall." Although Murdoch had not read Simone Weil at the time she wrote *The Bell*, its actions, including the much misinterpreted banding of the birds, correspond to Weil's description of the Cross as a "balance and a lever. A going down, the condition of a rising up. Heaven coming down to earth raised earth to Heaven. A lever. We lower when we want to lift."[12] (The mechanical process of raising the bell will arouse in Toby an "ecstasy" [p. 230].) As the Abbess at Imber Abbey says, "'Imperfect love must not be condemned and rejected, but made perfect. The way is always forward, never back'" (p. 253), that is, forward through incarnate, fallen, individual human personality and love rather than back to the self-willed Edenic dream of innocence at Imber Court.

The literature on Iris Murdoch to date is largely futile because it

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has not penetrated to the form of her fiction; while generously adducing the "ideas" from her philosophical papers, and more recently comparing one novel to another, it has not recognized that the statement of an individual book is essentially formal and figurative in origins, figured especially in the surpassing actions and complexly shifting relationships of characters. Instead it tends to impugn form as something "magical" and arbitrary; but I think such actions as the raising of the bell are metaphors implicated in a continuous, pervasive, and dazzling texture of metaphor, and that there is no other word for her work than allegory (certainly not "planted" symbols). It is of the nature of allegory that *actions* communicate as much as the "symbols" they dramatize, and it is certain actions in *The Bell* with which I propose to document a reading of the novel as an allegory of *felix culpa*.

Impatient as one may be with the criticism of this novel, it must also be said that no reader can hope to do anything like justice to the full complexity of Murdoch's thought and form. We may look forward to the study that must be done of the way in which the twins Catherine and Nick Fawley allegorically project the split between will and personality in the Imber Court scheme of things, and especially in Michael Meade's personal history—between spirit and depraved flesh, God and nature, saints and devils. Here I shall consider but three actions in the novel. Though Johnson does not identify the butterfly with the bell, these two actions (with the birds as well) are the *same* action, and that action is the central dogma of Christianity.

On the train on her first trip to Imber, the harassed and anxious Dora has, on a not really comprehensible impulse in the circumstances of her own duress, given up her seat to an elderly woman. As a happy consequence she finds herself sharing a railway car with an attractive boy who, with his round head ("Toby Roundhead," Dora thinks on hearing his name [p. 17], and he will indeed purify the Christianity at Imber Court), wide eyes, hair a little long, and graceful posture, has for Dora the glowing health and unmarked confidence of her own lost youth, "his riches all in store" (p. 16). On arriving she forgets her husband's notebooks and sun hat in the absorbing task of rescuing from the floor of the car a Red Admiral butterfly. The butterfly, as she kneels down to scoop it gently into her hand, brings a "friendly, surprised" look from the boy Toby and his older companion (p. 21); and we have seen that, a moment later, everyone is surprised as Dora's palms open like a flower and the radiant beauty of the butterfly emerges to circle around them.

Dora's name is the diminutive of Theodora or Dorothy, that is, a

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"gift of God." However unexpectedly and unconventionally in the midst of her typical remissness, Dora has, as if from a fortunate proximity to the other new arrival, the boy, come to Imber with a kind of fresh promise and gift of her own. The fate of the fallen butterfly is our first intimation of the "fortunate fall" or the Christian gift of grace, particularly as, when Dora kneels to rescue the butterfly, she says to those in the compartment, " 'Excuse me' " (p. 21). It is also typical of Iris Murdoch that, in a myth centering on a *lake* as the fallen world, the butterfly should be an "Admiral"; perhaps, even for Dora, there is mastery of the fallen element.

We are interpreting this first of our three actions in light of the recurrent pattern in the novel, of which the crux is the fall and resurrection of a great bell. The reader who thinks it too early to discern the significance we ascribe to the butterfly should consider the immediate sequel, Dora's first evening at Imber when, self-conscious at the pious gathering for Compline, she defiantly walks down to the lake, kicking off the high-heeled shoes which are as unnatural to her as the service. On her way back the shoes prove to be lost in the long grass, the second of Dora's distraught embarrassments of Paul. When a search party is organized to find the shoes, it is Toby who retrieves and bashfully presents them. As James Tayper Pace says, " 'Eureka! Toby was the lucky one' " (p. 38). If the lofty expectations of the Christians at Imber Court are, like the high heels, a particular trial to Dora, indeed a presumption of guilt, Toby's shy helpfulness, the contingency of his good offices, suggests that he is somehow for the defense. And if we ask how Dora can merit this, Father Bob Joyce comments on the shoes, that there is " 'more rejoicing over what is lost and found than over what has never gone astray' " (p. 38). The authentic *priest* in the novel, who is Imber Court's confessor, does not appear to share James Tayper Pace's faith in innocence retained. With Toby, Dora, and the shoes we have again the Christian paradox and joy of *felix culpa,* first imaged in the miraculous butterfly.

In Chapter 8 one group of Imber Court residents, including James and the spiritually intent and intense prospective novice Catherine Fawley, with her "thin, pure soprano," are singing madrigals on the "balcony" (p. 127). But the rest occupy themselves with nature this evening in visiting the naturalist Peter Topglass' bird traps and watching Peter band the birds. To begin with, as this group ferries across the lake to the traps, the metaphor of the lake as the fallen world is importantly reinforced (as it is everywhere, one must add). Everyone is "curiously elated" to see the dog Murphy, belonging to Catherine's

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scapegrace twin Nick at the Lodge, paddling beside the boat, his furry face kept "well above the surface." And when Toby (who has been lodged with Nick and Murphy) assures Dora that Murphy is all right and calls " 'Hey, Murphy! Good boy!' " it occurs to Michael Meade that Toby now regards himself as "part-owner of Murphy and able to answer for his peculiarities and well-being" (p. 128). Where Dora has confessed that she would like to swim but cannot, Murphy suggests that the guilty animal nature of man *can* learn to swim in the destructive element, and it is Toby who answers for the fact. That is, grace, one with the animal in the water (Toby as "part-owner") is responsible for its "well-being"—one of numerous puns (including the text of the Revelations of Julian of Norwich) in which indwelling grace is identified with the fallen element itself (well). It is also here, as they enter the woods, that in Michael's eyes Toby, another "good boy," increasingly partakes of the animal, "exceptionally attractive" to Michael as he bounds happily "like an exuberant dog," inspecting wild flowers, peering into mysterious bolt holes (pp. 130–31). Michael's sense of Toby "electrical with unused energy and hope" presages the sexual magnetism the boy will exert on him, allegorizing that Good wells up out of the fallen world (whence Toby is lodged, in the lake metaphor, with the "poor fish" [p. 49] and heavy-*drinking* Nick).

Peter's custom is to trap the birds in cages, "dome-shaped" wire structures they enter for food and sometimes " 'out of sheer curiosity' " (p. 133), and then to band and photograph them. On this occasion, amid sparrows and tits, there is one prize catch, a goldcrest. Peter's hand corners the tiny bird in the compartment, folding its agitated wings to its body. He closes the band around the scaly leg with his teeth. "At the sight of Peter's strong teeth closing so near to that tiny twig of a leg, Dora could bear it no longer and turned away." But, when Michael has photographed it, Peter tosses the bird into the air "and it vanished into the wood, bearing with it forever the information that on that particular Saturday it had been at Imber" (p. 134).

The operation has often filled Michael with uneasy excitement; when urged by Peter to handle the birds himself, Michael had been "too alarmed, it too much moved him with distress and pity, to hold in his hand those exceedingly light, exceedingly soft and frail bodies, and feel the quick, terrified heartbeat." He is afraid that one might die in his hand "as they sometimes did if one held them too tight" (pp. 132–33). On this occasion Dora too is full of "wonderment and distress."

Our referent here is Nick Fawley's mock sermon to Toby late in the novel: " 'Dearly beloved, we come of a fallen race, we are sinners one

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and all . . . the mark of Cain is upon us, and with our sin comes grief and hatred and shame'" (p. 278). The banding of the birds corresponds to the mark of Cain or to original sin, and thence to the governing metaphor of the "curse" on the bell in the lake, reinforced by such material as Michael Meade's alarming dreams of a booming bell in the lake and a drowned person being pulled out of the water by sinister nuns, as if some terrible curse threatened Imber Abbey, dealing death to Michael and Imber Court even as they aspire to holiness. But, as we know, the bell embedded in the ooze will rise. (The curse of original sin and death is indeed the reality known to the Abbey, but so is the Incarnation.) Just so, the birds, though marked, fly up and away.

The excessive, sentimental distress of Michael and Dora corresponds to that melodramatic sense of sin that is copartner to self-willed innocence (the twins Nick and Catherine), the fear or despair of fallen nature or personality that is the Imber Court syndrome. This includes the hazardous misjudgment in the rigid ethic of rules (holding the bird too tight). We may guess that the goldcrest specifically suggests Dora with her golden-brown hair and "feminine twittering" (p. 135). But the plight of the birds in the trap applies generally to Imber Court. As Peter tells the group, when the birds, trapped in the first compartment of the cage, "'try to get out by flying what seems the easier way into the second compartment . . . then it's still harder for them to escape'" (p. 133). That is, Imber Court's ethic of will and action paradoxically defeats the moral life and is an illusory freedom, magnifying the fallen condition. We think of Catherine, whose flight, as we sense it to be, to the Abbey as a novice will induce a yet more terrible beleaguerment by her inescapably fallen nature.

But as the birds, once banded, are released by this Peter who has the power to bind and loose, as they fly aloft like Dora's butterfly, the idea is clearly that of rebirth, of Paradise regained, and this set piece becomes one of the novel's most fetching renditions of *felix culpa*. Thus, when it is all over, Michael "laughed" to see how affected by it Toby has been: Toby's lips are "moist" where he has bitten them (the lake or Fall motif), but his eyes are "wide" (p. 134). Peter's traps, which he sets "in order to *ring* the birds" (p. 127; italics added), connect not only to the Fall and knowledge (cf. the birds' "curiosity" in entering the traps) but, of course, to the bell, the ring of joyous Easter. (According to the medieval chronicler, the bell "flew like a bird" into the lake [p. 42].)

We come now to the third action of the bell lifted from the lake. The description of the bell should confirm to any reader the specifically Christian myth, from the moment Toby's tractor draws it above the

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"muddy bubbles" and it lies stranded on the ramp "like a terrible fish" (p. 235). Inspecting the gaping and enormous "thing from another world" in the barn Toby and Dora find scenes of the life of Christ inscribed on it, the Nativity, people catching fish, the Last Supper. Dora sees "'the Crucifixion.'" "'And the Resurrection,' said Toby." (This is an improvement over an earlier draft of the novel, which nevertheless reassures us of its axis, where Paul describes the old bell to Dora as being carved with "reliefs of Adam and Eve.")[13] Toby also reads and translates the Latin inscription, amid crosses: "'I am the voice of Love. I am called Gabriel'" (p. 237).

Most of Murdoch's interpreters have connected this only in a general way to the Christian ambience of Imber Court—rather than as myth and meaning—or, like Johnson, have emphasized the bell as the vehicle of Dora's eventual "self-assertion." Johnson also mentions the commingling of religious and erotic imagery in passages about the bell. Alone with it in the stillness of the barn, Dora reaches into the inside: "Very lightly she touched the great clapper, which was hanging profoundly still in the interior" (p. 288).

Indeed, at the end of Chapter 17, having been "'marvellous,'" as Dora says, in his feat of raising the bell, Toby, "naked as a fish . . . felt a miraculous strength twisting inside him," and he falls upon Dora, who relaxes "receiving his weight" as they roll into the mouth of the bell, the clapper moving within the dark hollow and a muted boom echoing across the lake (pp. 237–38). Murdoch's critics have not generally connected this coupling, as we may term it, or the sexual love of Michael for Nick Fawley, and of Catherine Fawley for Michael, to the supernatural Love inscribed on the bell. It can be done at the naturalistic level if we remember the Abbess' words to Michael that the way of Love is always "'forward'" through the incarnate human personality.

But it is on the allegorical level that the absolutely unified form and meaning can be seen most immediately. The bell itself is the Annunciation, or the Incarnation of Christ; by that same token, but additionally in the *action* of course, it is also the Resurrection. Toby embraces Dora, who receives "his weight" because the essence of Christianity is the union of prepotent, saving grace with fallen human nature, and that is the truth the bell has to tell in defiance of Imber Court. In naturalistic readings Toby is normally the least assimilated of the characters. But his experiences in the lyrically written Chapter 10 are of capital importance, the matrix of Christian significance in the novel.

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Toby is certainly the reader's vision of felicity as he runs along the lakeside path, jumping the bramble "for sheer delight" (p. 150) and hearing the sudden gaiety of the nun's laughter across the water, at which he thinks that "to be good *and* gay was surely the highest of human destinies" (p. 151), which may be called the *felix* motif amid the solemnities of Imber Court. He luxuriates on the stone ramp sloping into the water, cuddling the animal Murphy to him "in a kind of physical rapture" and receiving the sun and the hot sparkling of the lake "with a luxurious zeal." He closes his eyelids, feeling "so happy he could almost die of it," but on awakening pushes Murphy off and knows it is time to swim. He looks down at the lake with "that sense of passing through the looking-glass, of disturbing and yet entering that other scene that grows out of the roots of this one" (p. 154). He dives vertically to the lake bottom where there is an obscure green light and a soft and sinister ooze. As he thinks "Supposing he were to find a corpse or something, a human form half buried" in that deposit, his hand encounters something rough and hard and, half-alarmed, he rises to the surface panting. His breath back, and finding himself uninjured, he dives again and shoveling the ooze aside feels "a thick arc-shaped rim" raised above the mud, something big with a pitted and fretted surface (p. 156). Rising again, inhaling, he hears across the Abbey grounds the hand bell ringing the Angelus. Determining to dive just once more he holds onto a massive rim, circular and hollow within, and "it occurred to Toby that it might possibly be a large bell." He rises again, determining to say nothing of this delightful place until he explores it further.

What sets Toby apart from Imber Court is not only his virtue, less striven for, less beholden to James's "'rules to live by,'" but the transport and humility with which he partakes of it, the gaiety shared with the nuns at Imber Abbey, and finally his ease in the natural world. Where James has spoken of innocence preserved, wisely cloistered in God's law, Toby's happiness comes to him instead as an intuition of "grace," a rapturous "renewal" of his faith that "lifted" him from the ground, full of "thanksgiving to God" (p. 151). The boy's youth and beauty may be our vision of innocence; but childhood and innocence are, in the curse of original sin, primarily emblems of that reality of Love or grace which may everywhere inhabit and redeem our natural being, forms of that joyous immanence of Christ in fallen nature, in the freakish casualty of human personality, by which His saving sacrifice is reenacted in whatever good we attain.

The water at Imber Court is our image of the natural world; the four rivers here (p. 27) are those which nourished the garden in

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Paradise (Genesis 2:10). In Chapter 10 Toby's exploration of reality has led him further from the shallower streams to the lake itself. Accosting fallen nature, Toby is no longer naked as at the pool; admonished by James, he has secured a pair of "bathing trunks" in the village (p. 148), a token that we have exchanged primeval innocence for the sacramental rite of Baptism into a different reality, another intensity, that paradoxical union of fallen nature and risen spirit that water may denote. At the same time, however, Toby is naked of his former sun hat, that familiar article at Imber Court.

In "The Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts," Iris Murdoch reminds us that the sun is for Plato the image of Good, that distant reality in light of which we progressively discern the forms of our world and know truth, but itself "a different kind of thing from what it illuminates."[14] In Chapter 10 of *The Bell* the sun is the supernatural grace that infuses the natural world. As Toby lies open to the sun on the ramp, embracing the dog beside him, his animal being is steeped in the sun. The sweet sleep into which he is invited by his sense of physical "well-being," a happiness "he could almost die of" (p. 154), allegorizes the paradox of youth: that innocent identity with nature which, though asleep to the moral world, though fated to death, is the overflowing receptacle of grace which will awaken and unite flesh and spirit in a different reality of good. This is the still point, the intersection of the timeless with time. Where *The Bell* is in many respects a novelistic orchestration of "Four Quartets," Toby here gives us our central correspondence to the unattended moment, the shaft of sunlight or waterfall or hidden laughter, which is in and out of time, the impossible union of spheres of existence reconciling past and future as they point to what is always present: "The hint half guessed, the gift half understood is Incarnation."[15] The beautiful boy asleep in the sun is our harbinger of divinity in the world.

Toby awakes in the temporal reversion, pushing Murphy off and therewith the unmixed bliss of his animal nature or first world. He is ready for the fallen moral world: "now it was time to swim, his body so baked that it seemed it must sizzle as it entered the glossy water" (p. 154). Plunging into the lake, Toby feels "the exquisite sensation of his body continuing to be hot in the cool water," that is, he falls into that different condition of *well*-being proportionate to grace.

The remainder of Chapter 10, sketched above, confirms the meaning of grace, Toby underwater allegorizing that searching "experience" James Tayper Pace has warned against as it issues in a transcendent discovery. The lake is the "looking-glass" world in which

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the natural scene is reflected "yet strangely altered" (p. 154). Whatever the associations with Lewis Carroll here (Humpty Dumpty, who had a great fall; who also provokes Alice to ask "whether you *can* make words mean so many different things"[16]), the main meaning is that the Imber Court model of innocence in the law is reflected yet altered in the Christian reality of Good in the *fallen* world. Toby invades that obscure "other scene that grows out of the roots of this one," that is, that after the fall of man lodges the mystery of the Incarnation. Deep in the soft and evil ooze, Toby envisages a human corpse "half" buried, the mortal inheritance our baptism partly signifies, but at the same time his hand touches the bell. With Dora we already know this to be "Gabriel"—the "Prayer of the one Annunciation" that transforms that other "calamitous annunciation," the birth of Christ perpetually transforming our wreckage and death.[17] And Toby hears from the shore the bell for Angelus, the service which commemorates the Incarnation. A bell has been James Tayper Pace's symbol of the open and clear works of the law; it now occurs to us that, hidden deep in the water which is the baptismal symbol of life, it might better signalize the mystery of the Word.

It is in the following chapter, of course, that Toby's "fall" takes place. The agent is Michael Meade, a homosexual for whom Imber Court is a kind of rampart against his own nature. His surname, like his whole life, suggests the two faces of good he cannot reconcile: "Of so much fame in Heav'n expect thy meed,"[18] but also the sweet, intoxicating mead of the temporal and physical world. Toby has driven with Michael to Swindon to buy a mechanical cultivator for the Imber Court market garden. On the way home they enter a pub—"'It's practically illegal, my bringing you in here,'" Michael says (p. 161)—where Toby insists on drinking the "rather strong" local drink, West Country cider (the proverbial apple), known to Michael since his childhood, "heartening and full of memories, all of them good ones" (p. 161). "Michael began to feel so happy that he could have shouted aloud." Drinking the cider, talking to the boy "seemed an activity so perfect that it left while it lasted no cranny for any other desire" (p. 162). In this very enjoyment Michael is conscious of "things missed, things sacrificed" in his life; there is a vision of plenitude, during his childhood, in the Long Room at Imber, but "to revisit without envy the scenes of a surrendered joy, and to taste it ephemerally once more, with a delight undimmed by the knowledge that it is momentary, that is happiness, that surely is freedom" (p. 162). In this intensified moment with its footfalls of memory, this ecstasy which is also detachment,

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"What might have been and what has been / Point to one end, which is always present."[19]

Eliot's lines refer to the actuality of the present moment and the end or purpose always present in it, Incarnation. Here it is Toby who is present, in the overall myth Incarnation, or divine grace. What Michael for the moment intuits, that good is not a function of something lost *or* retained, of time past or time future, of any appetency, Toby objectifies in the extra-temporal Christian reality of the novel, to which the allegorical method centered on him is itself an objective correlative. "If all time is eternally present / All time is unredeemable."[20] There remains, however, the law of man's being in time, for instance the Christianity of Imber Court with its conception of good as a function of choice, and of time as redeemable by human will. In this perspective the ineffable Christian paradox embodied by Toby must resolve into temporality, into its cyclic constituents of innocence and the Fall. "Only through time / time is conquered."[21] There is no space here to detail the complex and subtle development in the remainder of Chapter 11, of which the culmination is Toby's walking into the headlights of the van (to see if his eyes will gleam), "graceful . . . slim," and then leaning his head in through the window. "Michael put one arm across his shoulder and kissed him." Toby stands rigid, "a look of utter amazement . . . on his face" (p. 168).

In passages we have seen, and in a great many others, Toby has served to translocate the concept Good from the ceremonious regimen of Imber Court to nature, a concentration of love for which there exists no allowance at Imber Court. For the homosexual Michael Meade this natural image of good is unnatural, tainted with carnality and guilt, and any encounter must entail the same for Toby, but this is also and mainly a metaphor of Imber Court's general revulsion from nature, as in its judgment of Dora. In the paradox of Toby's purity as it is also magnetic sexuality Murdoch sums up the moral futility of Imber Court: innocence in this most spontaneous incarnation exerts attraction precisely as it cannot be "retained" but is of its *nature* foredoomed to experience. That is the reality of the fallen world. But it is as the concepts innocence and good fly apart, as they do on the Cross, that nature becomes the medium of grace; and this, in the allegory, is the compulsion Toby's beauty exercises upon Michael Meade. The overpowering appeal of his "electrical" but "unused energy" is the necessity of its liberation, or *felix culpa,* of which Dora Greenfield is to be the beneficiary.

At the penultimate moment before kissing Toby Michael has been

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> conscious of such a fund of love and good will for the young creature beside him. It could not be that God intended such a spring of love to be quenched utterly. There must, there must be a way in which it could be made a power for good. (pp. 166–67)

These lines are ironic only so far as Michael's good will and Toby's innocence are simultaneously to be engulfed in the "spring of love," which besides connecting to the lake metaphor of the Fall perhaps suggests Christ the tiger in "Gerontion,"[22] and in any case is to be Dora's salvation at Imber Court.

In the aftermath Toby embodies a new and knottier ground of morality at the Court, knowledge or the fortunate fall. Now "truant" from the market garden, thoroughly disturbed and wanting to "think," he crosses the causeway to the visitors' chapel attached to the chapel at Imber Abbey. Inside the visitors' chapel he peers through the grille into "the greater darkness" of the nuns' chapel, and this Upanishadic phrase[23] is connected to the lake, for "Toby was suddenly reminded of the obscurity of the lake" (p. 183). His thoughts as he sits at the back of the visitors' chapel confirm that, through Michael, "his whole conception of human existence was become in a moment immensely more complex," and he is now "less inclined to label Michael or to circumscribe what he was. He was filled rather with an immense curiosity" (p. 184).

But above all, fearing he might be a "natural homosexual," asking himself whether he is attracted by women, Toby conjures up a shapely yet maternal being and shyly begins to unclothe her. Contemplating the vision he realizes "that this immense incarnation of femininity was taking on the features of Dora Greenfield," and as he searches his mind it occurs to him that he has for some time been sensitive to her charms, her magnificent head and golden-brown hair and buxom body (p. 186). At this point he hears the footsteps and rustling as the nuns arrive for worship. "Toby was shaken. There was something monstrous, provocative almost, in the invisible and impregnable closeness to him of so many women" (p. 186). He turns and stumbles out of the chapel.

Thus the upheaval occasioned by Michael Meade makes Toby conscious for the first time of the compelling feminine nature from which not even the holy nuns are exempt. In the drama of the Fall, which is yet the fortunate fall, Michael Meade's human frailties have been exposed; Dora Greenfield's are suddenly forgotten or else embraced. To the skeptical reader we may add that the remainder of this chapter is yet another metaphor of the fortunate fall. Conscious of

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an obscure wish to do something violent, Toby climbs the wall of the taboo Abbey enclosure; the stone crumbles and he "fell" back but "the desire to see inside the enclosure had taken violent hold upon him" (p. 188). He gets astride the wall and is now tortured by the urge to jump down into the enclosure: "he *must* jump," and he does, landing "with a good deal of noise and damage to his clothing" (p. 189). He soon finds himself in a cemetery, rows of graves marked with white crosses. Thus does the Abbey enclosure, unlike Imber Court, manifest the central fact of the Fall. Toby is paralyzed with "shame and alarm" as one of the nuns tending the graves approaches him. But she is smiling and pleasant, knows his name, and invites him to try the swing hanging from a nearby cedar tree. As he sits in the swing and "urged himself several times to and fro" (p. 191), we are reminded of Michael's sermon on the "swing" of the bell that taking it down also takes it up. The beaming nun ushers Toby out through the gate which, he discovers, was not locked at all. She adds that "'we have a special rule which says that children can sometimes come into the enclosure.'" Where, as Simone Weil says, humiliation is an "image of humility"[24] (cf. Eliot on the "wisdom of humility"[25]) Toby feels "humiliated and ashamed" as he runs off saying to himself, "Damn, damn, damn" (p. 192). After Mark Strafford in the Land Rover offers him a "lift," his first question on reaching Imber Court is, "' You don't happen to know where Dora is just now, do you?'" (p. 192).

With this much assistance the reader should be able to appreciate the subsequent action in Chapter 17. "'Good God,'" Dora has said on learning of the bell in the lake; and if it is only "'half sunk,'" can't Toby raise it (p. 212). "'With an engineer to help me,' said Dora, 'I can do anything'" (p. 213). With winch and hawser ("with a sense of desperate joy he felt the hook pass through the hole" of the bell [p. 234]) Toby does raise the bell from the lake on Dora's behalf, his "homage to Dora" (p. 230) of which the meaning is grace allied to fallen personality, fulfilling the promise of their mutual arrival at Imber Court and their "natural complicity" (p. 209). For the later action in which Dora rings the bell in the barn (not only the Gospel stable but with a roof "partially fallen in" and great "crossbeams" [p. 152]), almost "annihilated by the wonder" of its thunderous voice, the reader is referred both to the text and to the chapter by Johnson with which we began. The still later action in which the pristine *new* bell to be installed in Imber Abbey, decorated with silk fashioned from war-surplus "parachute material" (p. 258), is christened by plunging into the lake can be no part of our discussion here, except as it confirms the perpetual reenactment of the

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Fall so far as Imber Court cleaves to its Adamic ideal of innocence and the complementary absolute of sin in all outlying precincts (Nick Fawley at the Lodge). Tragically, Michael Meade fails Nick.

Let us conclude, instead, with Iris Murdoch's description of Imber Lake as shaped like an *L*, an "upside down" L from the vantage point on page 27. The house is in the "crook" of the L. By contrast to the elevation of Imber Court, the lake of fallen history is the *upside down* form of Christ's redemptive Love, of God become Man, of Incarnation, the sole reality of Christianity. The "crook" of the L is at once the crookedness of nature strayed which Christ takes upon himself and the crozier of the Good Shepherd: "To God more glory, more good will to men." The main action of the novel is the right-side-upness in the raising of the bell by Toby and Dora, so that the "voice of Love" may sound, and this is at one with most of the actions of the book.

In Memoriam: Joseph Speller, Jr.

[1] Iris Murdoch, *The Bell* (New York: Viking, 1958), pp. 41–43. All subsequent references are to this edition and are cited parenthetically.

[2] A. S. Byatt, quoted in Deborah Johnson, *Iris Murdoch* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1987), p. 82.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 77.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 96

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] John Milton, *Paradise Lost,* XII, 469–78, in *Complete Poems and Major Prose,* ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (Indianapolis, Ind.: Odyssey, 1957), p. 465.

[8] Galatians 2:19–20.

[9] T. S. Eliot, "Four Quartets," in *Collected Poems 1909–1962* (New York: Harcourt, 1963), pp. 198, 199.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 199.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 198.

[12] Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace* (London: Routledge, 1963), p. 84.

[13] Manuscript of *The Bell,* Special Collections, University of Iowa Libraries.

[14] Iris Murdoch, "The Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts," *The Sovereignty of Good* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), p. 92.

[15] Eliot, "Four Quartets," p. 199.

[16] Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass* (Mt. Vernon: Peter Pauper Press, n.d.), p. 123.

[17] Eliot, "Four Quartets," pp. 193–94.

[18] John Milton, "Lycidas," in *Complete Poems and Major Prose,* p. 122.

[19] Eliot, "Four Quartets," p. 176.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 175.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 178.

[22] Eliot, "Gerontion," in *Collected Poems 1909–1962,* pp. 29, 30.

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[23] Cf. David Rubin's novel of India, *The Greater Darkness* (New York, Farrar, 1963).

[24] Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, p. 30.

[25] Eliot, "Four Quartets," p. 185. The nun's words and Toby on the swing remind us of the Gospel: "Whoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:1), where it is not the innocence but the meekness of children Christ enjoins upon the disciples. Toby touches the risen bell "almost humbly" (p. 237).

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The Picaros of John Dos Passos

Joseph Fichtelberg

After his long and controversial career, John Dos Passos' literary politics remain a matter of some dispute. Starting out on the far Left and ending on the far Right, he has been called everything from agrarian to radical republican, rebellious neurotic to arch conservative. But the term most often applied to his fiction is "anarchist." Dos Passos, numerous critics have argued, was faithful to the individual alone, defending him in the early novels against the army, big business, and liberals, and in his later novels against the New Deal, big labor, and communists. "Dos Passos believes in absolute or primitive liberty, the supreme good of the anarchist creed," wrote Martin Kallich in 1950, calling that creed "a kind of unchanging monomania lending unity to all his creative work."[1] Ten years later, confronting the writer's sharp turn right, David Sanders argued that Dos Passos was "driven by an anarchistic philosophy" that attacked "the submergence of the individual."[2] And John Diggins, in his recent, careful study of "conservative odysseys," refers as a matter of course to Dos Passos' "anarcho-individualist sensibilities," his "anarchistic suspicion of the movement of power from one source to another."[3]

Yet the novels themselves cannot be so neatly classified, for it is difficult to find in them any radical individualist who thrives. From the early aesthetes like John Andrews, crushed by the senseless machine, to the helpless vagabonds who wander through *U.S.A.*, to the noble failures like Jasper Milliron and Blackie Bowman of the later novels, Dos Passos' individuals fare badly indeed. Even during the writer's most militant phase, his characters never find that bliss in unrestricted freedom that an anarchist philosophy would suggest. Instead, Dos Passos seems to be doing something else in his fiction—portraying his

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world in the dark, "acid" manner he discovered in Pío Baroja,[4] a manner that can only be called "picaresque."

Although critics have occasionally noted a picaresque element in Dos Passos' fiction, none has applied the term consistently. Often the term "picaresque" has been used to mean "tale of the road," as in Linda Wagner's study, or to describe, by implication, Dos Passos' desperate vagabonds.[5] Most careful has been Arthur Mizener, who called attention to a "characteristic novel form" in which a lone hero experiences "a series of socially representative adventures" that expose "the institutionalized corruption" of industry and politics.[6] In a word, Dos Passos was a satirist—his target, the manifold threats to individualism. But to leave the matter there is to miss the most subtle and difficult aspects of Dos Passos' art. For the picaresque form inherently suspects individualism: it ruthlessly detaches its protagonists from all communal support, and then punishes them for their sins. Solitude *is* the picaro's sin; he wanders through a fallen world without church, saints, or God. For Dos Passos, this was the twentieth-century world, with its devastating wars and state terror, its rejection of those communal values he found in Federalist America. And yet it was the Federalists who preached freedom, the unrestrained inventiveness of a Franklin, whose "full career" had been "enough . . . for four men,"[7] the stout populism of a Jefferson. All his life Dos Passos sought to balance these conflicting needs for unrestricted freedom and visionary community. That balance was impossible in modern America, for the nation that so cherished restless enterprise had found the means to crush its visionaries—had turned its idealists into picaros and its picaros into millionaires. In his fiction Dos Passos explored the paradox; only in his histories could he master it.

The picaresque genre arose in Spain in the mid-sixteenth century, and reached an apex fifty years later. Its matter was the comic misfortunes of the picaro, a rogue or vagabond who moved through society, ever on the road, living by his wits. His is a tale of sinister initiation. Orphaned at an early age and of disreputable background, he is thrust destitute upon the world, seeking some substitute home. When he is lucky enough to find a master he is abused; when he cannot, he resorts to petty crime, often card-sharping and theft. Although the picaro may delight in trickery for its own sake, his experience is often much darker. He may be savagely beaten, starved, jailed, crippled by self-righteous protectors of the society he seeks to enter, because the picaro is a social climber. Rarely accepted by the upper class, he nonetheless has a passionate faith in his prospects and is willing to

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sacrifice anything for security. Hence his "protean nature," his ability to "assume the social disguise of every profession and vocation."[8] He moves from role to role with a relentless intensity that might be called tragic, did he possess grandeur; but the picaro's struggle for survival robs him of all principle, all inner life. "Creating a self that his will supports but that he knows for an illusion," writes Alexander Blackburn, "the picaro evolves into a symbolic being, a confidence man, outwardly one who shares faith in existence, inwardly one reduced to spiritual nothingness."[9] His failure reflects that of his society.[10]

Perhaps more than any other European country, Spain, during the Golden Century, felt that failure. Its writers—Mateo Alemán, Francisco Quevedo, Cervantes, and the anonymous author of *Lazarillo de Tormes*—dreamed of an ordered, medieval world "in which the only transformation of personal concern was that from worldly illusion . . . to the otherworldly reality" (*MP,* p. 90). The soul's journey was supernal not terrestrial; the goal of the earthly traveler was to achieve that single-minded devotion of a Saint Bernard, who, according to legend, so little heeded his surroundings that on a journey past Lake Lausanne, "he demanded where was that lake."[11] The picaro's tortured wanderings were a parody of the saint's devotion. Troubled by a rising bourgeoisie, the aristocratic Quevedo savaged the upstart commoner Pablos and sent him packing to America. Troubled by his *converso* origins, Alemán degraded and then saved his bastard Guzmán. And in the cause of *honra,* the author of *Lazarillo* exposed the cupidity of all social climbers.

The picaresque world was so brutal, so chaotic because it measured the breakup of the old order, measured "the increasing difficulty," writes Richard Bjornson, "of reconciling aspirations for upward mobility with psychological needs for security and self-respect in a hostile, dehumanizing society."[12] At best, such a milieu thrives on hypocrisy; at its worst, it prizes depravity. What it most condemns is freedom, that "anarchical freedom" that chooses license over discipline, and forsakes the church for the degraded world.[13] Whether one associates it with "the rise of bourgeois individualism"[14] or with the conscience of the Inquisition,[15] the picaresque is a profoundly conservative genre.

Consequently, the picaresque tale thrives on reversals—on the irony and paradox Dos Passos found in a Spanish contemporary. Pío Baroja's trilogy *The Struggle for Life* (*La lucha por la vida,* 1904), which deeply influenced *U.S.A.,* traces the fortunes of the orphan Manuel as he claws his way through the Madrid underclass. A servant in a shabby boarding house, he is forced on the street after his mother dies. Although he had been apprenticed to a broker and shoemaker, he is

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unable to make his way, and falls in with a gang of cave-dwelling urchins, ragged, thieving, desperate. For years his sole refuge from utter degradation is a series of furtive families—an impoverished ragpicker, whose littered shack gives Manuel "a sense of tranquillity and shelter";[16] the prostitute La Justa, with whom he shares "fascinating plans of regeneration" (*W,* p. 280) in a filthy room; his benefactor, Roberto, who lets him sleep on an empty couch.

But Manuel is not merely a hapless victim. A true picaro, his dream is "to change his mode of living" through his own "energetic determination" (*W,* p. 4). To that end he early takes part in a swindle, playing the son of a baroness in order to defraud the woman's lover. "Ah! Rogue!" declares his master, Mingote, in mock approval. "You rise out of the gutter to the heights of aristocracy. You may even manage to acquire a title" (*W,* p. 47). Some time after the failure of this scheme, Manuel again entertains wealth. "You and I . . . were born to be rich," his thieving cousin Vidal declares as he sends him to a tailor, promising that Manuel would soon be "on Easy Street, as respectable as any one could wish" (*W,* pp. 249, 253). Since business and robbery were identical, it made little difference how one rose in the world (*W,* p. 252). Indeed, the orphan does achieve respectability, establishing a printing shop, spending his leisure in useless political debate, and finally betraying his anarchist cronies to save his own skin. "The young vagrants thrown into the gutter . . . the children who go to the factories in the morning, frozen through and through . . . the fallen women who are sunk in the moral death of prostitution, trampled upon alike by . . . the bourgeoisie and . . . the proletariat" (*RD,* p. 268) no longer move him. Like the political talk itself, Manuel's rise is "nothing but so much artificial formalism, absolutely empty" (*RD,* p. 321).

This savage irony, rendering all politics useless, structures Baroja's trilogy. The swindler Mingote, for example, "a partisan of anarchic-philanthropico-collectivist ideas," is also a desperate capitalist, who, "when he recounted his successes as an advertising agent, as a business broker," would betray the "modern man" (*W,* pp. 70, 71):

> This ex-loan shark had collaborated in several ignominious labours with the comrades of dynamite and picric acid, wheedling money out of them, now for the purpose of effecting a coup and purchasing bombs, again for the compiling of a libertarian dictionary, wherein he, Mingote, with his formidable powers of analysis, more formidable than the highest explosives, shattered to fragments all the traditional notions of this stupid society. (*W,* p. 70)

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Anarchists, themselves victims of want, offer no hope in a unprincipled society. That hopelessness is captured by a political journalist called "the Superman," who consigns all principles to the dinner table:

> *The Cub Reporter:* The country should be told things straight from the shoulder.
> *The Master:* It would get indigestion. Remember the boarding-house peas. (*W*, p. 142)

The comment, in an essay entitled "They're All Ragamuffins," captures Baroja's stance. His was the stark certainty that since all creeds turned on self-interest, all creeds turned on themselves. Against the brutal inequities of Spanish society, the only certainty was struggle. "One needs some lie or other in order to go on living," comments Roberto.

> "Let Anarchism come; of course it won't because it can't. But just let us suppose that it does come, and that it ushers in with it a peaceable, equitable distribution of the land . . . within a certain length of time . . . you'll have the old problems of subsistence and the struggle for life back again under circumstances more harsh and horrible than to-day." (*RD*, p. 320)

And as all principles reverse, the only answer is "Action," "the warrior instinct"—the very bases of capitalism (*RD*, p. 321). If Baroja sketched a world in which "men die friendless on the streets and in the hospital" (*W*, p. 343), [17] he knew there was no other. Motivating his ironies was the central contradiction of picaresque fiction—that freedom entraps.[18] Although the picaro may appear "the anarchist as frustrated idealist" crying out at a vicious world,[19] he is a partner in that viciousness. His blind freedom dooms him to slavery.

"I am sure that the intending author of American fiction would do well to study the Spanish picaresque novels," wrote William Dean Howells in 1895, "for in their simplicity of design lies one of the best forms for an American study. . . . Each man's life is a romance on the Spanish model, if it is the life of a man who has risen, as we nearly all have, with many ups and downs."[20] Howells, of course, was misinterpreting a single feature of the picaro, his restless acquisitiveness. It was a feature Tocqueville had noted with aristocratic disdain, in his mocking portrait of the man who sells his house "before the roof is on . . . embraces a profession and gives it up . . . settles in a place which he soon afterwards leaves," and spends his few free days "whirl[ing] . . . fifteen hundred miles . . . to shake off his happiness."[21] Yet this restlessness served nationalists as well. Emerson himself sang the praises of the sturdy New Englander "who in turn tries all the professions, who *teams it, farms it, peddles,* keeps a school, preaches, edits a newspaper,

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goes to Congress, buys a township, and so forth, in successive years. . . ."[22] This was the protean American, the virtuous republican, who, like Franklin, could live enough for four men.

When Dos Passos looked at Americans, he saw both restlessness and energy. In his retrospective collection of essays, *The Theme Is Freedom,* he praises the obscure colonist Peletiah Webster, who failed at preaching and "a series of mercantile ventures," and who compounded his errancy by "coming out with untimely notions about the nature and operation of money and about credit and taxation and about a suitable form of government for the United States."[23] The same embattled individualist appears in *U.S.A.,* in the biographies of Thomas Edison, Charles Steinmetz, and the Wright brothers; in Mark Antony Croft and Jay Pignatelli of *Chosen Country*; in Blackie Bowman of *Midcentury,* and John Goddard of *Century's Ebb.* Yet restlessness also marks some of Dos Passos' great villains—the corrupt Minor Keith, for example, founder of United Fruit Company, who sold collars, surveyed forests, raised cattle, built railroads, and shipped bananas, rubber, vanilla, and tortoise shell throughout the Western world.[24] John L. Lewis, the despotic labor leader of *Midcentury,* "wandered from job to job:—through gold camps, silver mines, copper towns from Arizona to Utah to Wyoming—hoping to strike it rich."[25] There were even tales of how he had swum a raging river and felled a mule with one blow. American restlessness, Dos Passos knew, was legendary, but it could easily enslave.

Like the picaro, most of the fortune hunters in Dos Passos' fiction are orphans, a trait that has often been linked to the writer's own life. The list includes almost all his major characters: Fanshaw Macdougan and Nancibel Taylor (*Streets of Night*); Jimmy Herf and Ellen Thatcher (*Manhattan Transfer*); Mac, Eleanor Stoddard, and Charley Anderson (*The 42nd Parallel*); Mary French and Margo Dowling (*The Big Money*); Glenn and Tyler Spotswood (*Adventures of a Young Man, Number One*); Jay Pignatelli and Lulie Harrington (*Chosen Country*); Jed Morris (*Most Likely to Succeed*); Jasper Milliron (*Midcentury*). Typical are the fortunes of Mac, "a rebel by birth and blood" (*42P,* p. 37), who begins working with a genuine rogue, Emmanuel R. Bingham, peddling tracts and pulp literature in the wilds of Michigan. After Bingham is run off for philandering with a farm wife, Mac goes "on the bum" (*42P,* p. 59) with a young radical, and works as a dishwasher, railroad laborer, lumberjack, farmhand, and factory worker from Saginaw to San Francisco. Even when he finds steady work as a printer he cannot settle down, but moves from Goldfield, Nevada, to San Diego and Los Angeles, to Mexico, where he briefly owns a bookstore before fleeing

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Zapata's troops. The last we see of him, he is tearing up a railroad ticket and considering staying on at Vera Cruz with his Mexican girlfriend and her mother.

Just as the picaro chases security, so Mac drifts through numerous failed families. After his mother dies he moves to his uncle's house in Chicago, where his crippled father, too, withers and dies. When Uncle Tim declares bankruptcy, Mac takes up with Bingham, who leads him through a succession of cozy but treacherous farmhouses. With the Wobblies in Nevada, he finds a fragile community, ever threatened with destruction by the mine company's gun thugs, yet he abandons Goldfield for family life with Maisie. Still, in San Diego he feels restless: despite his affection for his children, he cannot embrace respectability, and uses an argument with Maisie as an excuse to abscond, as his father had done before him. In Mexico he is warmly received by socialists but understands little of their politics, and leaves Mexico City as the revolutionaries advance. Even his life with the submissive Concha is unstable, the merest impulse preventing him from returning home. If Mac is the prototypical anarchist of Dos Passos' fiction, thriving in an America where individualism was still possible, he is also the quintessential picaro, flitting rootlessly through the world.

Blanche Gelfant has observed that such characters in Dos Passos' fiction seek a stable identity. By the logic of the picaresque journey, however, stability is impossible. Almost uniformly, these wanderers feel their world to be inescapably oppressive. At the front with his radical friends, Martin Howe thinks back to what drove him overseas: "I used to think . . . that it was my family I must escape from to be free; I mean all the conventional ties, the worship of success and the respectabilities that is drummed into you when you're young."[26] Yet in France he discovers a deeper terror of which the war is only a symptom, the "power to enslave our minds"—the patriotic cant that led a generation to suicide (*OMI,* p. 159). John Andrews, too, fled the stifling conformity of Harvard and New York for the ruinous "stagnation of dusty . . . automatons" that was army life.[27] Ellen Thatcher flits from one stifling affair to another, feeling like a bug-covered lighthouse,[28] a "porcelaine figure under a bell-glass" (*MT,* p. 300), a "photograph of herself . . . forever frozen into a single gesture," strangled by an "invisible silk band of bitterness" (*MT,* p. 375). Harvard holds much the same despair. "Have you seen a dredger ever, a lot of buckets in a row on a chain going up an inclined plane," asks Wenny. "That's what people are, tied in a row on the great dredger of society."[29] Fanshaw complains of "this fearful environment . . . the narrowness of our families . . . the moral

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code" (*SN*, p. 185). Even Wenny's futile gesture of defiance makes no difference; Nan remains "oppressed," like Prufrock, by the "smell of the gas-burners and boiling water and toast" (*SN*, p. 276),[30] by Sunday visits with her Aunt M, and by her futile career. For these aesthetes, at home or abroad, there is no real freedom.

To be sure, the picaro often thrives, at least by the world's standards. Margo Dowling's is a typical pattern. An orphan in South Ozone Park, New York, raised by an alcoholic father and a stepmother who later remarries and sends her to a convent, she finds early success as a vaudeville actress, but pays for it dearly. To escape her actor-stepfather's molestations, she elopes to Cuba with a homosexual, where she is virtually imprisoned by her mother-in-law. After contracting syphilis and losing her baby, she manages to escape back home, finds work as a chorus girl, and charms a number of rich men. The richest is Charley Anderson, himself a picaro, who supports her in style in New York and Florida; but Anderson dies in a car wreck, and Margo soon returns to poverty. Ever on the move, she drives cross-country to Hollywood, and for three years works as an extra, until she meets the mighty Sam Margolies, marries, and becomes a star, "the nation's newest sweetheart" (*BM*, p. 426). The secret of Margo's wild success is her ability to adopt any role, as if she had no inner life. She is the consummate actress, playing with her lovers as she would before an audience. On a drive to Connecticut, for example, she tells Jerry Herman her life story:

> about her early life on a Cuban sugarplantation and her father's great townhouse in the Vedado . . . and how her father had been ruined by the sugartrust and she'd supported the family as a child actress in Christmas pantomimes in England and about her early unfortunate marriage with a Spanish nobleman. . . . (*BM*, p. 261)

Ironically, the screenplay Sam Margolies sketches for her is closer to life:

> "You are tired of the giddy whirl of the European capitals. . . . You are the daughter of an old armyofficer. Your mother is dead. You go everywhere, dances, dinners, affairs. Proposals are made for your hand. Your father . . . is to be sent to Africa to repel the barbarous Moors. He wants to leave you in a convent but you insist on going with him." (*BM*, p. 412)

But as Margolies adds, the story is "nonsense" (*BM*, p. 413), merely a star vehicle. Indeed, as Margo becomes a star, she reflects a national mania. Like Charley Anderson's, her "whole career seems . . . to be an

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example . . . of how American democracy works at its very best pushin' forward to success the most intelligent and bestfitted and weedin' out the weaklin's" (*BM,* p. 300). It is the hollow success of the picaro.

What so troubled Dos Passos, at all stages of his career, was the slender difference between actual good fortune and this perversion. For the very culture that permitted such excesses also permitted experiment and rewarded talent. Even in his grudging gallery of successes in *U.S.A.* he acknowledges the relentless ingenuity that so well served Margo. Thomas Edison got his start, appropriately enough, aboard a train, where he rigged a printing press and published a rolling newspaper. Later he was a "tramp operator through the whole Middle West: Detroit, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Louisville, New Orleans, always broke . . . always trying tricks with the telegraph" (*42P,* p. 298). His protean ingenuity produced a torrent of inventions, and yet he was never one "to worry about philosophical concepts" (*42P,* p. 300). In Dos Passos' laudatory refrain, he simply "got a hunch" and "tried it out" (*42P,* p. 301).

This almost naive impulsiveness, unreflective as Margo Dowling's ambition, became emblematic, for Dos Passos, of a certain American ideal. One sees it in his portrait of James Pignatelli, who "had the love of railroads, of undiscovered blank places on maps of the western country,"[31] and leads a peripatetic life, keeping two households on two continents. Ingenuity drove his career, like that comic "circus" he stages on one trip west:

> mixing toddies, singing songs from Gilbert and Sullivan's new operettas, punning in hog Latin and discussing Cicero's shortcomings as a politician, creating comic characters out of the conductor, the steward, the brakeman, the gandydancers along the track. . . . (*CC,* p. 10)

Inventiveness moved him to prize "freedom of action and speech" (*CC,* p. 16) above all else—even as he helped to merge railroads.

One sees the same type in Dos Passos' late portrait of Robert Goddard, who all his career worked virtually alone inventing rockets and rocket fuels, bazookas and jet engines, guidance systems and coolants, and left behind the work for one hundred patents. The "Moonrocket Man" prepared the way for the Apollo Project, with its innovations in computers, engineering, metallurgy, and "innumerable varieties of novel materials produced by thousands of different contractors in virtually every state in the Union."[32] No more spectacular example could be found of America's ingenuity.

"The spectacle itself," Tocqueville wrote of this American

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restlessness, "is as old as the world; the novelty is to see a whole people furnish an exemplification of it" (*DA,* 2:145). Dos Passos begins *U.S.A.* with such a feverish figure, a young wanderer who "must catch the last subway . . . run up the gangplanks of all the steamboats, register at all the hotels, work in the cities, answer the wantads, learn the trades . . . live in all the boardinghouses, sleep in all the beds" (*U.S.A.,* p. vi). *Midcentury,* the last novel published in Dos Passos' lifetime, ends with an identical image. Stan Goodspeed would spend his way around the world—on *"food, drink and room accommodations at the finest restaurants, night clubs and hotels . . . auto rentals . . . through the world's leading auto rental agencies . . . gift and florist shops in major cities . . . air, sea, and rail transportation . . . and men's . . . and women's clothing stores . . . and much more"* (*Mc,* p. 491).

The differences between the hungry Vag and the spoiled Goodspeed are not as telling as their similarities, for each character embodies his culture's failed idealism, that Whitmanic breadth of vision that Dos Passos himself strove to achieve. One hundred million self-seekers could stifle *"the possibilities of all beneficent and manly outcroppage, and that aspiration for independence and the pride and self-respect latent in all characters"* (*CE,* p. 104). The American picaro differed in one essential way from his Spanish forebears. Whereas the Spaniard was often a lone figure or one of a small band, preying on his unsuspecting peers, in the American version, all were picaros—both rogue and citizen followed the same path. The vicious Samuel Insull, who used everything imaginable to turn a profit, was virtually indistinguishable from his boss Thomas Edison, whose inventions served the same end. The spendthrift James Pignatelli could defend absolute freedom while he consorted with robber barons. At bottom, it was a question Glenn Spotswood long ponders, one of means and ends: Americans craved freedom, but used it to oppress. Rugged individualism caused its own destruction.

The unpredictability of talent, the insidious ways in which success breeds failure, preoccupied Dos Passos throughout his career. The irony begins early when Phineas Blackhead, of *Manhattan Transfer,* dies a bankrupt in his plush bed, spat upon by his servant. In *U.S.A.,* William Jennings Bryan, the great populist orator, peddles Florida real estate "every day at noon on a float under an awning," his silver tongue promoting land fraud (*42P,* p. 172). Dos Passos thought the same of labor leaders. John L. Lewis, industrious commoner, became "a sizable figure in the financial world," a capitalist and major creditor who "reduced the size of the labor force engaged in mining by tens of

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thousands" (*Mc,* p. 116). Still more barbed are the sketches of teamster bosses, whose vices Dos Passos studied in the McClellan Committee transcripts. Like Benjamin Franklin, Dan Tobin "set to work to better himself" (*Mc,* p. 216), going to night school and lectures, spending free moments reading, as he toiled in factories, stables, and streetcars, and sold cheese, eggs, coffee, coal—whatever he could find. His rewards included two mansions, lavish vacations, a Cadillac with chauffeur, and a generous pension when he retired from the Teamsters' presidency. "Why shouldn't men of enterprise be attracted to Labor?" Dos Passos mocks (*Mc,* p. 218). Dave Beck compounded the irony. In true Whitmanic fashion he reached out to embrace all laborers—

> laundryworkers, truckdrivers, delivery men, warehouse workers, chauffeurs, bakery employees, garage mechanics, filling station men, shipping room employees, platform men, people who worked in dairies and bakeries and icecream plants and freezers, and in breweries and soft drink plants, and automobile salesmen and cannery workers, haulers of logs and timber, common carriers, busdrivers: anything on wheels or served by wheels. (*Mc,* p. 219).

But Whitman's populist vigor had become something quite different now: democracy was whatever Dave Beck ordered. Even Will Jenks, who wages a heroic fight against the corrupt Red Top Cab Company, is forced to sell out to Red Top's backer, Alphonse Lewin. The careers of J. Ward Moorehouse, Herb Spotswood, Jed Morris, and Danny De Long all follow this pattern, the ironic course of the picaro.

Although some Dos Passos characters sense these ironies, none masters them. When Charley Anderson begins to make big money, he stops to wonder whether he is "rookin' " or being rooked by his business partners (*BM,* p. 91); later, a virtual bankrupt discussing shady real estate, he "couldn't make out whether he was hiring Senator Planet . . . or whether Senator Planet was hiring him" (*BM,* p. 357). Sue Ann Crawford, martyr to her husband's ambition, asks after a campaign stop, "Are we crazy or is it just the rest of the world?"[33] And Chuck Crawford himself, with mordant accuracy, updates Bryan's ruined populism, declaring, "it's every man a millionaire for himself" (*NO,* p. 163). Perhaps Jed Morris has the last word on capitalist distortion. "Feller," he tells his lover, "we live in a farcical world! . . . A revolutionary play that runs a hundred nights on Broadway is no longer a revolutionary play. It's a goddam hit," affording its backer a tidy profit.[34]

Occasionally, futile revolution becomes pointed imagery. Jimmy

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Herf has a nightmare vision of being "fed in a tape in and out of revolving doors . . . grinding out his years like sausage meat" (*MT,* p. 94), and Daughter, in desperation, cries out for "loop the loop" before she is killed in an airplane crash (*1919,* p. 415). More often, characters sense their impotence in genuine nightmares. Glenn Spotswood dreams he is addressing a workers' meeting, yet he can utter "no words" as the hall is shelled with gas.[35] Jasper Milliron, soon to be forced out of Abington Products, dreams of being smothered by catfish bearing the faces of his associates (*Mc,* p. 306). And Jay Pignatelli, unable to forget his failure in the Sabatini case, dreams of the courtroom where "he was in danger of death, he was not the attorney he was the defense; he was not on trial he was convicted" (*CC,* p. 469–70). Like all other endeavors, eloquence amounts to impotence in this picaresque world.

Under such conditions, self-consciousness is terrifying. Only at fleeting moments do Dos Passos' picaros attempt to confront themselves, in hasty glances at a stranger in the mirror. The scene is a leitmotiv in the novels. David Wendell, on the verge of suicide, looks up into the saloon mirror and sees the face of his father, with its "jowls pinkish, close-shaved, constricted by a collar round backwards" (*SN,* p. 197). Eveline Hutchins, whimpering about her "silly life," sees a bitter "old hag's tearsmeared face" (*1919,* p. 323), as does Mary French, who "hardly knew herself," so "haggard" and "desperate" was her look (*BM,* p. 138). As Jed Morris leaves a swank Hollywood restaurant, he "found himself looking in a mirror at a short fat man with . . . discontented dark eyes," dragging a haggard woman in an ill-fitting dress. Only later did he recognize himself and his wife (*MLTS,* p. 225). The source of their confusion lies in the picaro's stark pose: he is all outside; he has no inner life. Hence, Dos Passos' misfits cannot finally own their lives. The most sinister casualty is J. Ward Moorehouse, the consummate publicist, who confronts "long processions of andirons, grates, furnace fittings, drawer pulls" as he shaves (*42P,* p. 251). But even the conscientious fail. Georgia Washburn, before her suicide, felt that the "creature she was inside of just wasn't her at all"—an "automaton," an "iron maiden."[36] Roland Lancaster, padding through Havana in search of the past, feels himself a disembodied soul, "somebody else," beside whom he stands "in another man's shoes."[37] And throughout his young life, Jay Pignatelli continually feels like the "hollow mask of himself," a "nameless man" (*Mc,* pp. 433, 426). Returning to his hotel room during the Sabatini trial, he seems an alien:

> The books on the shelf, the papers on the desk, the brush and comb on the bureau had a vaguely familiar look, like things he'd

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> seen passing through some friend's apartment. Could those be his slippers under the bed? The letters on the table had his name on them, or was it some discarded alias? (*Mc,* p. 457)

Devoid of all inwardness, the picaro literally reflects a world that turns integrity on end.

Jay's blankness before his books and letters recalls one of Dos Passos' most bitter charges: that language itself has become ironic. "The old vocabulary of democratic liberties is made to mean something quite different from what was originally intended [in] . . . the society that Jefferson and Madison lived in," he claimed in 1958.[38] So segmented were modern lives, "so cut up into specialized departments and vocabularies," that even the most intelligent "tend to get so walled up in the particular work they are doing that they never look outside of it" (*OP,* p. 62). Replacing the old breadth of vision was a cheap commercialism, shrilly omnipresent—"buy speed, buy horsepower, buy chromium buy happiness in a split-level ranch-house, elegance in shocking pink lipstick, passion in a jar of Parisian perfume"—so that even in a wilderness one could "never be free" of the lie (*Mc,* p. 491). It was the same scourge the radical writer had denounced years earlier, this sense of words grown "slimy in the mouths of lawyers districtattorneys collegepresidents judges" (*BM,* p. 437), now become a national disease. One sees it in the adman, Dick Savage's, casuistry when Daughter asks him to declare his love: "Of course I do, I don't know what love is . . . I suppose I love any lovely girl" (*1919,* p. 389). As Savage renders the word lecherous, he hears the leitmotiv of picaresque reversal, "somebody else's voice in his ears" (*1919,* p. 389). The bombastic Newsreels, "the wreckage of public voices," as Charles Marz calls them,[39] underscore the irony:

> HUNT HATCHET WOMAN WHO ATTACKED
> SOCIETY MATRON
> CLASPS HANDS OF HEROES
> GIRL DYING IN MYSTERY PLUNGE
> *He's the kind of man that needs the kind of woman like me*
> Completely Lost in Fog over Mexico
> ASSERT RUSSIA RISING
>
> (*BM,* p. 434)

Unity and isolation, marriage and murder, the spirit of order and chaos alternate like a recurrent nightmare, distorting the world at large. So, too, in *Midcentury,* Terry Bryant listens incredulously to a Labor Board decision proving self-defense aggressive:

> "Grievant's act cannot be justified as selfdefense, since at the time

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> grievant struck the blow the other employee's blow was completed and grievant was no longer in danger from that blow. Although provocation may have existed provocation alone does not constitute justifiable selfdefense." (*Mc,* p. 351).

"What a thing to call a man, a goddam grievant," is Terry's bewildered response (*Mc,* p. 352). And always in Dos Passos' later fiction, lurk the communists and their agents, twisting democratic idealism into grotesque parody. It was the academic leftists who turned John Dewey's "old optimistic pragmatism . . . upside down, the way Marx did Hegel's, and were using it as a tool to dismantle the very traditions of civilization" (*CE,* p. 124). Marxists had merely adopted the tools of college presidents and judges, taking the good old words, "*profits, free enterprise, investment,* and even *dividends,*" and giving them "an evil context."[40] The language of freedom itself had become unreliable.

Toward the end of the Depression—with his disillusionment in the Spanish Civil War and his increasing suspicion of communists, socialists, and the New Deal—Dos Passos began to seek alternatives to these manifold corruptions in that eighteenth-century world his father once praised. "Political thought has to look backwards as well as forwards," he declared in the preface to *The Ground We Stand On,* away from "the doubletalk of Marxist ideology" to the "rich variety and dignity" of the Founders.[41] As he did so, Dos Passos sensed a counterweight to chaos. In place of the picaro forced to thread his treacherous way through cutthroat capitalism, Dos Passos observed the many-sidedness of the colonists, their almost breathtaking ability to abandon the motherland, scratch out a New World living, and like a cat, always land on their feet.

Such a man was Roger Williams—"preacher explorer trader negotiator linguist" (*GW,* p. 19)—who forged a colony out of pure antinomianism. Here was another philosophical anarchist, a Seeker who gradually withdrew from all communion save with his wife alone, yet nevertheless knew how to impose his will. "He was a storekeeper, an explorer, an organizer, an exhorter, a man of action . . . busy with practical problems to be solved . . . in a whirl of talk, argument, greeting, sonorous prayer" (*GW,* p. 81). His colony was cast in his image, a "motley crew of honest men who wanted to build up their homes in freedom, fanatics who wanted to impose their own notions on the rest, and plain rascals and loose livers who took refuge . . . from the straitlacedness of the other colonies" (*GW,* p. 77). Yet Seeker and settlement survived. So, too, did young Ben Franklin, thrust upon raucous London through the trickery of Governor Keith, and returning barely two years later, "quite uncolored by egoism," with the rudiments

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of a career—"Dr. Franklin the philosopher and mechanic, the ingenious amateur who loved to tinker with scientific appliances and with metaphysical notions and droll rhymes and sayings" (*GW*, p. 196). Later Dos Passos would spend a decade studying Thomas Jefferson, architect, lawyer, scholar, botanist, legislator, farmer, and President. Truly, these individualists were "epic figures" (*GW*, p. 197), exemplary men.

What prevented a nation of such epic individualists from coming apart was a mixture of tolerance and modesty. Roger Williams held his colony together by main force, yet he declined great honors, prizing "humane behavior and civil liberty" over "selfseeking" and sharp deals with the Indians (*GW*, p. 74). Nor was Ben Franklin "ever . . . quite won" by the sycophants who praised him; for he desired a sufficiency, and little more. He was a *"bourgeois gentilhomme"* (*GW*, pp. 196–97) who preferred self-reliance to dominance. In truth, there was little to dominate. Joel Barlow's Connecticut, according to Dos Passos, could have stood for the whole nation:

> It was a time . . . when a general equality of wealth and education made people's relationships and contacts simple, and gave life in the small neat towns . . . a pleasant tone of frank conviviality. There wasn't much cash around but want was unknown in the wellbuilt farmhouses . . . enough of the skepticism of the century had seeped into the churches to lighten the load of calvinist theology without disturbing the close community life or the cheerful imperatives of family ethics. (*GW*, p. 259)

Luxury and vice, Franklin had declared, would be absorbed by the wilderness, to leave behind a polity where each rose according to his ability and lived within his means. And should the colonists court anarchy, there was the voice of Joel Barlow to warn them:

> But know ye favored race one potent head
> Must rule your States and strike your foes with dread.
> The finance regulate, the trade control,
> Live through the empire and accord the whole.
>
> Ere death invades, the night's deep curtain falls,
> Through ruined realms the voice of UNION calls
>
> . . . . .
>
> On you she calls! Attend the warning cry:
> YE LIVE UNITED OR DIVIDED DIE! (*GW*, p. 272)

Here was bombast in the service of vision, the very antidote to the rampant self-seeking of shortsighted colonists. Again, the vision of Roger Williams was resonant. Despising the Quakers' "crazy revival-

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ism," he nevertheless defended them in Rhode Island, so much so that he allowed them to take control of the colony (*GW,* p. 160). Yet, in power or out, he urged restraint. The ship of state had room for all creeds, he wrote in 1654; but "if any should preach or write that there ought to be no commanders or officers, no laws or order, nor corrections nor punishments;—I say, I never denied, but in such cases, whatever is pretended, the commander may . . . punish such transgressors" (*GW,* p. 166). Only a strong state could guarantee freedom, a condition even anarchists had to respect. The community was preeminent.

Perhaps the Federalist community Dos Passos most cherished was Monticello, the manor Jefferson designed, staffed, and managed like a colonial city state. Here, amid his dependents—his own extended family, the eighty-three slaves, "Dabney Carr's orphaned family . . . and their maids and mammies"[42]—Jefferson could follow his whims as readily as he could entertain French nobility. He could build porches and prune fruit trees, read law and "ride for recreation in the mountains and feed his tame deer and keep up his weather charts, and exchange notes . . . about astronomy and the solar eclipse" (*TJ,* p. 195). His sedate industry, reminiscent of Dos Passos' own activities at Spence's Point toward the end of his life, yielded the supreme political wisdom. "We should dispose of & employ the geniuses of men," Jefferson wrote, "according to their several orders & degrees" (*TJ,* p. 195). Absorbed in family, in work and experiment, even the most restless soul would find peace, and the community a new dignity. For Jefferson, too, was an orphan, whose lifelong goal was to engage men "to know ambition in all its shapes and prompt [them] to exert their natural powers to defeat its purposes" (*TJ,* p. 201). With a like restlessness, Dos Passos spent a lifetime exposing ambitious picaros, attempting an elusive balance between "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" and "the common good" (*TJ,* p. 200). Communist sympathizer or Goldwater Republican, his goal was the same: to restore to rootless Americans at least a fleeting sense of self.

[1] Martin Kallich, "John Dos Passos: Liberty and the Father-Image," *Antioch Review,* 10, No. 1 (Spring 1950), 100, 99.

[2] David Sanders, "The 'Anarchism' of John Dos Passos," in *Don Passos, the Critics, and the Writer's Intention,* ed. Allen Belkind (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1971), p. 122.

[3] John Diggins, *Up from Communism* (New York: Harper, 1975), pp. 1, 241. For other statements of this view, see Arthur M. Mizener, who claims that Dos

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Passos took "quite seriously the anarchistic individualism and egalitarianism of the American tradition" ("The Gullivers of Dos Passos," in *Dos Passos, the Critics, and the Writer's Intention,* p. 48). Richard Chase suggests that "After his early 'Marxism' and attraction to the Communist party . . . Dos Passos fell back on a temperamental, individualistic dissidence," common to both the "reactionary capitalist" and the "revolutionary anarchist" ("The Chronicles of Dos Passos," in *Dos Passos, a Collection of Critical Essays,* ed. Andrew Hook [Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974], p. 176). And Kenneth Ledbetter, in "The Journey of John Dos Passos" (*Humanities Association Bulletin,* 18, No. 2 [Fall 1967], 36), flatly states: "He is, and always has been, an anarchist." Other critics stress Dos Passos' radical individualism, although they stop short of calling him an anarchist. Alfred Kazin, who terms Dos Passos a "democrat," notes the writer's "concern with the primacy of the individual, with his need to save the individual from society" (*On Native Grounds* [New York: Reynal, 1942], p. 344). Lionel Trilling asserts that Dos Passos "puts a peculiar importance on the individual" ("The America of John Dos Passos," in *Dos Passos, the Critics, and the Writer's Intention,* p. 37). Chester E. Eisinger, in "Dos Passos and the New Liberalism," suggests: "The theme of all the writing [Dos Passos] did between 1939 and 1951 . . . has been the imperative need to guarantee the survival of the individual in the modern state and to protect his personal liberties" (*Dos Passos, the Critics, and the Writer's Intention,* p. 138).

[4] "Baroja Muzzled," *Dial,* February 1923, p. 199.

[5] Linda Wagner, *Dos Passos, Artist as American* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1979), p. 37. (See also Blanche H. Gelfant, "The Search for Identity in the Novels of John Dos Passos," in *Dos Passos, the Critics, and the Writer's Intention,* pp. 159–60. I am indebted to Gelfant's insights throughout this discussion.)

[6] Mizener, "The Gullivers of Dos Passos," p. 48.

[7] John Dos Passos, *The Men Who Made the Nation* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1957), p. 43.

[8] Stuart Miller, *The Picaresque Novel* (Cleveland, Ohio: Case Western Reserve Univ. Press, 1967), p. 70.

[9] Alexander Blackburn, *The Myth of the Picaro* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1979), p. 20. Hereafter cited as *MP.*

[10] See also Claudio Guillén, "Toward a Definition of the Picaresque," in *Literature as System* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1971), pp. 71–106; Christine J. Whitbourn, "Moral Ambiguity in the Spanish Picaresque Tradition," in *Knaves and Swindlers,* ed. C. J. Whitbourn (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1974), pp. 1–24; Klaus Poenicke, "Fortune's Wheel and Revolution: On the Picaresque View of History," in *Forms and Functions of History in American Literature,* ed. Winfried Fluck, J. Peper, and W. Adams (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1981), pp. 120–33; Frederick Monteser, *The Picaresque Element in Western Literature* (University: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1975); W. M. Frohock, "The Idea of the Picaresque," *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature,* 16 (1967), 43–52; D. J. Dooley, "Some Uses and Mutations of the Picaresque," *Dalhousie Review,* 37, No. 4 (Winter 1958), 363–77.

[11] *The Golden Legend or the Lives of the Saints as Englished by William Caxton* (London: J. M. Dent, 1900), 5:21.

[12] Richard Bjornson, *The Picaresque Hero in European Fiction* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1977), p. 19.

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[13] Alexander A. Parker, *Literature and the Delinquent* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1967), p. 18.

[14] Bjornson, *The Picaresque Hero in European Fiction,* p. 14.

[15] Parker, *Literature and the Delinquent,* pp. 32 ff.

[16] Pío Baroja, *The Quest,* pp. 204–05. English translations, by Isaac Goldberg, are as follows: *The Quest* (New York, Knopf, 1922); *Weeds* (New York, 1923); and *Red Dawn* (New York, Knopf, 1924). All citations will hereafter be given parenthetically, cited as *W (Weeds)* and *RD (Red Dawn).*

[17] Quoted in Dos Passos' *Rosinante to the Road Again* (New York: Doran, 1922), p. 89.

[18] Ulrich Wicks, "The Nature of Picaresque Narrative: A Modal Approach," *PMLA,* 89, No. 2 (Mar. 1974), 246.

[19] Miller, *The Picaresque Novel,* p. 65.

[20] Quoted by W. M. Frohock, "The Failing Center: Recent Fiction and the Picaresque Tradition," *Novel,* 3, No. 1 (Fall 1969), 63.

[21] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* trans. Henry Reeve, ed. Phillips Bradley (New York: Vintage, 1945), II, 144–45. Subsequent citations are from this edition, cited as *DA.*

[22] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance," *Works* (1903; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1968), II, 76.

[23] John Dos Passos, *The Theme Is Freedom* (1956; rpt. Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), pp. v, vi.

[24] John Dos Passos, *U.S.A.* (New York: Random House, 1937). *The 42nd Parallel,* pp. 242 ff. Also included in this edition are *1919* and *The Big Money.* Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text, as *42P, 1919,* and *BM.*

[25] John Dos Passos, *Midcentury* (Boston: Houghton, 1961), p. 110. Hereafter cited as *Mc.*

[26] John Dos Passos, *One Man's Initiation: 1917* (1920; rpt. Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1969), p. 159. Hereafter cited as *OMI.*

[27] John Dos Passos, *Three Soldiers* (Garden City, N.Y.: Garden City Publishing Co., 1921), p. 216.

[28] John Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer* (New York: Harper, 1925), p. 182. Hereafter cited as *MT.*

[29] John Dos Passos, *Streets of Night* (New York: Doran, 1923), p. 88. Hereafter cited as *SN.*

[30] The parallel was suggested by Iain Colley, *Dos Passos and the Fiction of Despair* (London: Macmillan, 1978), p. 23.

[31] John Dos Passos, *Chosen Country* (Boston: Houghton, 1951), p. 4. Hereafter cited as *CC.*

[32] John Dos Passos, *Century's Ebb* (Boston: Gambit, 1975), p. 472. Hereafter cited as *CE.*

[33] John Dos Passos, *Number One* (Boston: Houghton, 1943), p. 73. Hereafter cited as *NO.*

[34] John Dos Passos, *Most Likely to Succeed* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1954), p. 51. Hereafter cited as *MLTS.*

[35] John Dos Passos, *Adventures of a Young Man* (New York: Harcourt, 1939), p. 292.

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[36] John Dos Passos, *The Grand Design* (Boston: Houghton, 1949), pp. 391, 398.

[37] John Dos Passos, *The Great Days* (New York: Sagamore Press, 1958), p. 167.

[38] John Dos Passos, *Occasions and Protests* (Henry Regnery, 1964), p. 71. Hereafter cited as *OP*.

[39] Charles Marz, "*U.S.A.*: Chronicle and Performance," *Modern Fiction Studies*, 26, No. 3 (Autumn 1980), 407.

[40] John Dos Passos, *The Theme Is Freedom*, p. 237.

[41] John Dos Passos, *The Ground We Stand On* (New York: Harcourt, 1941), p. 3. Hereafter cited as *GW*.

[42] John Dos Passos, *The Head and Heart of Thomas Jefferson* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1954), p. 179. Hereafter cited as *TJ*.

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Eliot, Milosz, and the Enduring Modernist Protest

Jesse T. Airaudi

That anyone might consider him a "modernist," and compare him to T. S. Eliot besides, probably would cause the Polish emigré writer Czeslaw Milosz to puzzle over definitions. But the term modernism itself has been a puzzle, and the movement, if we can agree to call it even that,[1] has seen stranger bedfellows. Yet in several essential ways, the two Nobel laureates may be seen as modernist protest poets.

By "modernism" I mean the movement in twentieth-century literature that T. S. Eliot has come to exemplify. This seemingly circular definition will call to mind such studies as Michael Levenson's *A Genealogy of Modernism* (1984), David Perkins' *A History of Modern Poetry: From 1890 to the High Modernist Mode* (1976), and Peter Faulkner's *Modernism* (in the *Critical Idiom Series,* 1977)—studies that reveal Eliot as the heir—or appropriator—of the movement, and of the term itself. To cite one representative study, that of Michael Levenson, Eliot "came to exemplify English Modernism, since he presided over the changes in its definition and since he wrote its most celebrated work [*The Waste Land*]," a work which illustrates the conscious manipulation of the culture's tradition, or, in Eliot's famous words, the "mythical method."

Indeed, recent studies that diagnose the health (or morbidity) of modernism have assumed this past/present definition: in her 1984 study *Has Modernism Failed?,* Suzi Gablik asserts her belief that today's avant-garde artist has abandoned the concept of modernism that defines the movement as a tradition-based protest against twentieth-century materialistic values. And in his *Modernist Survivors* (1986), Morton P. Levitt assumes that such survivors are novelists who employ mythical methods. Even Roger Shattuck—who has carried his "Poverty

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of Modernism" polemic from *The Innocent Eye*[2] to his recent critical reviews of eight books on the modern era—concedes that a "restricted definition" of modernism can be useful. Some characteristics of the period 1900–1930, he says, are prominent: artists rejected bourgeois materialistic society and tried to "direct events" for the transformation of the general society; they perceived that a "synthesis" requiring "profound modification of all aspects of life and society" was to be the means of transformation; and, for the major writers of the era, a "survival" of "spiritual experience" was to be the driving force of this transformation.[3] In the writings of Eliot and Milosz, these elements of protest, synthesis, and spirituality combine and define them (in this "restricted"—we might say "constructivist"—sense) as modernists.

In this sense of modernism, the poet sees tradition, a sense of order, threatened: Milosz states that "There is a species of people who feel the compulsion more than others, people for whom reality is too painful as long as it remains anarchic, untrappable, and who feel continually obliged to give it order, a language." This sense of continuity, Milosz goes on, is of chief importance, for, as he says, "any disruption in order in man is tantamount to a cosmic eruption."[4] In his Nobel Lecture (1980), Milosz spoke passionately to the intellectual community and mass media about the "evil forces" assaulting his homeland; the speech illustrates his self-characterization as "catastrophist."[5] A quick overview of the review articles about the plight of Central Europe corroborates his anxiety; to choose just one for illustration: in "The Tragedy of Central Europe," Milan Kundera admits that the culture has not yet "perished," but

> if to live means to exist in the eyes of those we love, then Central Europe no longer exists. More precisely, in the eyes of its beloved Europe [which is losing its cultural memory] Central Europe is just part of . . . a totalitarian . . . civilization [which is] the negation of the modern West . . . and nothing more, nothing more.[6]

For many undergraduate students, Eliot is introduced in precisely these terms: the anthologizers Ellmann and O'Clair state that for Eliot "the disjunctiveness of the world was intolerable, and he was determined to mend it."[7]

The sense of catastrophe and the need to remember characterizes both Milosz and Eliot. Milosz often reiterates that in times of catastrophe, in an awareness of danger to "what we love," we are permitted to "sense the dimension of time and to feel in everything we see and touch the presence of past generations." But, he regrets, "Our

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planet that gets smaller every year, with its proliferation of mass media, is witnessing a process which defies definition, characterized by a refusal to remember." He continues, quoting Nietzsche: "The eye of the nihilist . . . is unfaithful to his memories: it allows them to drop, to lose their leaves," and "what he does not do for himself, he does not do for the whole past of mankind: he lets it drop."[8] We can see how closely these pronouncements echo T. S. Eliot's views on tradition and memory. Another, from one of the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures that Milosz gave at Harvard in 1981–82: "It seems to me that [a new order] will be connected, in one way or another, with a new dimension entered on by elemental humanity . . . the dimension of the past in our human race." And from the same lecture series, "To make present what is gone by," to establish an "identification with people of the past, to a feeling of fraternity that helps us penetrate the curtain of time"[9]—these and other passages from various works of Milosz explain the notion he calls "the Past-Future axis," including his view of great poetry as "palimpsest."

These are strong echoes of Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and its sequel *After Strange Gods,* as well as of *Notes toward a Definition of Culture.* Yet such a close parallel does not dispose Milosz to see Eliot as a fellow protest poet—a poet predicting catastrophe, perhaps, but not a poet of protest, for Milosz believes that Eliot's use of the past is unrelated to the aim of protest. In *The Land of Ulro,* Milosz states that "It is difficult to find any tomorrow," any "open future" in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land.* Moreover, Eliot's work is like Allen Ginsberg's poetry, containing "despair at the imprisonment of man in an evil civilization, in a trap without release."[10] Perhaps Milosz is comparing Eliot the English modernist too closely with the decadent strain in the Polish Moderna of 1890–1918, a movement that, as Milosz points out, was justly satirized for its "confessions of internal tragedies" (mere "masks characteristic of the period") and "the fashionable sobbing over the cruelty of existence."[11] Thus, in *The Witness of Poetry,* he links Eliot and Pound as poets who pack their verse with fragmentary images, "cheerless" images, images that do not point a way out of the contemporary catastrophe. "The model of time is regressive," Milosz writes, and the "future does not promise anything good." In fact, Milosz quotes from *The Waste Land* to characterize Eliot and other "gloomy" poets like him: "as often occurs in contemporary prose-poetry, one finds a 'heap of broken images, where the sun beats,' fragments enjoying a perfect equality and hinting at the reluctance of the poet to make a choice."[12] Of course Pound and Eliot parted company on just this point; nevertheless, in Milosz's view, Eliot is seen

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not as St. John the Baptist but as Ezekiel crying "The end has come!"[13] For Milosz, memory that is not inspired, not transforming, is mere Romantic nostalgia.

It is likely that Milosz read *The Waste Land* but not much of Eliot's critical writing, because (as Milosz says in his own book of criticism) poetry is so much more important than books about poetry. Although Milosz's attitude toward Eliot seems to be "He who desires but acts not, breeds pestilence," there is much in Eliot's critical work that allies him with a reconstructive—that is, protest—poetics.

In the poetry of catastrophe and protest, Milosz insists, the writer must make a choice if the work is not to remain a melancholy brooding over a lost past, and the writer can only become worthy as a poet by being faithful to reality, yet "evaluating it with a sense of hierarchy."[14] This hierarchic evaluation Milosz insists upon is what Eliot calls the "mythical method," that is, "tradition" (in its unconsciously held complexity of good and evil) consciously ordered by an intelligent "orthodoxy," as Eliot wrote in *After Strange Gods*. In fact, both writers refer to this method by exactly the same name, the "historical sense."[15]

The word "orthodoxy" introduces a note of uneasiness; many readers are not willing to pursue either writer's protest because of it. But both writers convincingly base their protests on reasonable premises. Both disdain Romantic excesses in both art and religion to avoid being grouped with the "mystical mob" (in its "muddleheadedness," the "cosmic crowd" substitutes for genuine "imaginative" vision a mere "imaginary" "anti-world," to use Milosz' terms from *The Land of Ulro*). In short, for Eliot and Milosz, religion, poetry, and social thought are one and the same thing because their outlook is "anthropocentric," based on the human rather than the nonhuman or the merely "metaphysical."[16]

Of course, this "orthodox" view has another, dangerous, side. Both poets believe that just as mankind can get lost in the ethereal, he can get lost in the "immediate." If God's grace has given man a world which, though fallen, may be reconstructed in religious-poetic imagination for salvation, that fallen world may also trap him in a damning world of single vision. This is true for Eliot ("Sweeney [or Sweeney-ism] guards the horned gate" of imaginative vision), and for Milosz, who is a disciple of William Blake, employing Blake's myth. In the myth of "Ulro," which depicts our fallen state, "Urizen," the purely rational way of looking at this world keeps the mind in chains of matter and time. But Blake counters Urizen with "Los," the imaginative faculty that can "hammer" together out of time and matter a liberating vision. For

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Milosz, the myth is real; he is not employing myth ironically, post-modernistically: the catastrophe of Central Europe (which may all too soon sweep over the entire globe, Milosz warns) is a consequence of "Urizenian" acceptance of the teachings of positivist science. War for dominion, genocide, the use of fission for weapons—all are "spiritual consequences" of a physical idea.[17]

Both poets reveal themselves as protest poets not only because they have identified the causes of their cultures' decay, but because they propose a "rescue" (a term I borrow from Milosz), a rescue through inspired memory; that is, through "Imagination." In an essay entitled "Ruins and Poetry," Milosz states that the

> poetic art changes with the amount of background reality embraced by the poet's consciousness. In our century that background is, in my opinion, related to the fragility of those things we call civilization or culture. What surrounds us, here and now, is not guaranteed. It could just as well not exist—and so man would construct poetry out of the remnants found in ruins. . . .[18]

Rescue from ruins. The phrase could be an alternate title for this essay. Before examining Eliot's *The Waste Land,* it is important to cite some of his critical work of the late 1930s, which sets up a theoretical foundation for such a reconstruction or "rescue." Moreover, this theoretical base is common to both Eliot's and Milosz' protest.

In the series of lectures later published as *The Idea of a Christian Society,* Eliot explained what he meant by "idea": following Coleridge, he defined "idea" as the end or "ultimate aim" of a concept. The "idea" or "aim" of modern society Eliot found to be single, the "hypertrophy of the motive of Profit into a social ideal." A "plausible case," he maintains, can be made to show that the multiple aims of culture have been replaced by the sole aim of a "financial oligarchy." Eliot denies that he is preaching a religious revival: the main point of the lectures is that men are as likely to focus on one "idea" as another, whereas they should integrate the several aims of a vital culture.[19] He was to argue about multiple aims in later critical pieces such as *After Strange Gods,* in which he explained the "Heresy" of the subtitle, *A Primer of Modern Heresy,* as a kind of partiality, a separateness from a larger truth. This follows from his notion in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" that "originality" is a wrong approach without a corrective view to the whole truth of history, that is, to "orthodoxy."[20]

Such pronouncements about one-sidedness and many-sidedness are echoed in a recent study of modernist art and architecture. This

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application of the single- and multiple-motive theory to architecture—especially to the building of cities—will be useful when we examine the "ruins" of T. S. Eliot's *Waste Land* and Milosz' "homeland."

In *The Shock of the New,* apropos of memory, Robert Hughes states that "any view of art which insists on locating art's meaning in its power to do what had not been done before tends to reject the benefits of the Modernist spirit," because "Memory is reality. It is better to recycle what exists, to avoid mortgaging a workable past to a nonexistent future. In the life of cities, only conservatism is sanity. It has taken almost a century of Modernist claims and counterclaims to arrive at such a point." And accounting for the failure of Brasilia, Hughes arrives at the point Eliot made in his social essays of the Thirties: Hughes states that there is "trouble in cities when men think of single rather than multiple meanings."[21]

The trouble in *The Waste Land* is clear: London City, the financial center of London, is an "Unreal City," as the narrator—or central consciousness of the poem—reminds us several times. The City is filled with zombie-like crowds. But if you were to walk in the City of London some night, you would see almost no one, because nobody lives there. They only work there. Even the pubs—and in England pubs are a way of life—close early. It is the best possible social example and artistic emblem of what Eliot meant by the single-aim of society.

The City of *The Waste Land* appears hopeless, and it seems that there have been nearly as many debates about whether *The Waste Land* reveals despair or offers hope as there have been readers of that poem; the thick volume entitled *Storm over the Waste Land* edited by Robert Knoll records just a small sample of that controversy. However, a case can be made for hope (and therefore, protest, in the sense that Milosz wishes to use the term) in the poem.

In *The Waste Land,* Eliot uses a section of London as a contrasting, "multiple-aims" emblem. Recall the line that begins the section introducing Magnus Martyr Church and the fishermen's pub: "O City city"; the first "City," the financial center of London, is capitalized; the second, a contrasting "city," is lower case. The first is emblematical of the single-aim society, the second of a traditional, multiple-aim society. The passage reads:

> O City city, I can sometimes hear
> Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,
> The pleasant whining of a mandoline
> And a clatter and a chatter from within
> Where fishmen lounge at noon: where the walls

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Of Magnus Martyr hold
Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold.

In contrast to the deadened financial City, here is life. Actually, not far away is a marketplace, the old Billingsgate fish market, emblematically balancing the life of this district among profit motives, religious motives, and civil motives. In fact, if you look carefully at the entablatures of Billingsgate market, you can still see escutcheoned there a crucifix, topped with a crown, flanked by Thames salmon, the product of the fishmen's trade. The triad is a perfect emblem of a balanced, multiple-aim society. I think Eliot selected the neighborhood on lower Thames street purposely, as he did St. Magnus Church with its Greek architecture. As well as he knew Matthew Arnold's views about Greek "wholeness," and considering his own views of tradition, Eliot may be offering the "Ionian splendour" of St. Magnus Martyr as a reminder. Perhaps here in the shadow of the enormous financial center of London City is a fragment that is both a protest and a guide to the future. It is the Greek ideal, in latter-day fragmented form, of *metropolis,* mother city, with its architectural and moral balance of temple, forum, and marketplace.

Such balance is yearned for—and offered as a solution—in Milosz' work as well. "Ulro," he says, is "civilization at war with itself," and the single-aim motive tearing apart the organic bonds of culture is, as he puts it, "the cult of the state." If we were to use the notion of "Unreal" cities, then, for Milosz, "Moscow" (the "holy city" of the "New Faith" of Urizen) typifies the single-aim society. In *The Witness of Poetry,* he elaborates: "Now as the century draws to a close, there is no doubt about the parasitic character of any state based upon a monopoly of ownership and power."[22] As an intensely pessimistic poet, he worries about the "monopoly's" power, about destruction in "the name of inflexible principles," "violating, in the name of doctrine local mores (that is, everything which grows slowly organically, for centuries)."[23] In his essay "Ruins and Poetry," he illustrates: "one striking feature of Polish poetry in recent decades has been its search for equilibrium in the midst of chaos," especially after the war years, when order, "artificial, imposed from above and in conflict with those organic bonds that survive such as the family and parish church" threatened Polish culture.[24]

In an interview, Milosz stated that because it has fused the legislative, executive, and judiciary balance of powers [organs of social multiple aims, Eliot might say], "the State, like a crab, has eaten up all the substance of society."[25] This view is corroborated by Milan

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Kundera's essay, "The Tragedy of Central Europe": "nothing could be more foreign to Central Europe and its passion for variety than Russia: uniform, standardized, centralizing, determined to transform every nation of its empire . . . into a single Russian people (or more generalized), a 'single Soviet people.'"[26] Another Central European writer, Zbigniew Herbert, more personally relates the effects of life under a single dominant social force: "One has to admit that one is a slave. A very unpleasant statement but true. It means that my existence, the contents of my manuscripts and my inner peace depend not even on the whims of a general but often on those of a major."[27]

It is obvious that Milosz suffers under tyranny, and he has stated at the conclusion of *The Witness of Poetry* that if he does not have "reasons for optimism" then "at least" he has "opposition to hopelessness." This sounds less like protest and more like "resistance," in the manner of Joseph Brodsky, the Russian emigré, who remembers and writes of personal matters only as a means of defiance: "Why do I bother these brain cells?" he asks. Because "it is not in the interest of the state. That is the only thing which keeps me going."[28] Or in the manner of Milosz' countryman, Zbigniew Herbert, who feels that "during a period of repression," one must "learn to live with everyday despair, telling oneself that perhaps one must write but that it is not necessary to publish,"[29] an act of defiance called "writing for the drawer."

On the contrary, nearly everything that Milosz says concerning writing points toward an active, transforming protest calling upon the vital principle inherent in history. A particular point he makes about the past can help us to understand how transformation takes place. In *The Witness of Poetry*, Milosz states that "It would be too early . . . to relegate Rome and Byzantium to the irretrievable past, since their heritage constantly takes on new forms, often difficult to define."[30] This is the point Eliot makes in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" when he writes that there is "a mind of Europe . . . a mind which changes, and . . . this change is a development which abandons nothing en route."[31] Nothing is abandoned, though it is obvious in studying Eliot and Milosz that much is forgotten by mankind "en route." It is also obvious that the "heritage" or the "mind" of culture is deposited in forms of some kind or other, "ruins" of some type. Milosz, like Eliot, looks to the Greek past for the causes of the current catastrophe; there, too, he finds his solutions. Milosz notes that the "Hellenic past . . . is particularly understandable for a Polish poet" not only because both cultures have been "rich in defeats and illusions," but because "the pity and terror" of

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the human condition is depicted in these two cultures not in abstractions but "in relation to a given time and place."[32] Time and place.

If we were to sum up all of Milosz' writing, we would have to say that it is about time and place, but more specifically, about how we inherit "mind" in time and place—and how the mind is "disinherited." Consider, for instance, this poem, which serves as an epigraph to his book about poetry; abbreviated, it reads as follows:

> My generation was lost. Cities too. And nations. But all this a little later. Meanwhile . . .
> That boy . . .
> Now he sees his homeland . . .
> Clever . . . Attentive, as if things were instantly changed by memory
> Riding in a cart, he looked back to retain as much as possible
> Which means he knew what was needed for some ultimate moment
> When he would compose from fragments a world perfect at last.

Milosz' little poem is tender, filled with loss, yet, at the same time, with hope. There is inspiration here, as Milosz uses the term, in the Blakean sense. The boy, clever and attentive, is reconstructing time and place instantly—or, at any rate, he is learning to do so. A part left out to make a further point reads: "That boy, does he already suspect / that beauty is always elsewhere and always delusive?" The point here is the one that Milosz and Eliot make in their critical writing: the tradition does not stand still—cities pass, nations pass, but the human requirements that built them up remain. As the "What the Thunder Said" section of *The Waste Land* has it, "What is the city over the mountains / Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air / Falling towers / Jerusalem Athens Alexandria / Vienna London / Unreal." So "that boy" in the poem is learning something about what Milosz calls "catastrophism," but he is also learning something about "constructivism," we might say. He is making mental images, constructs, because he needs to orient himself in time and place. All creatures do, as Milosz reminds us. But humans go far back into history for their orientations. Eliot might say that boy is setting his lands in order; clever and attentive, he is transforming time and place even as it slips into the past. As the poem says, an "ultimate moment" in which "to compose from fragments a world perfect at last."

The boy in the poem could be Milosz. Early in *The Land of Ulro*, Milosz says that even as a schoolboy, he "understood that a homeland

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was both very much a need and a product of the mind." And that understanding gives shape to the book. In the final chapter, he returns to watch the boy he was in Poland and finds, as he said in the first part of the book, "a great arc with which to bind early youth with maturity"; by "recalling that the boy and the poet-'catastrophist' and the old professor in Berkeley are the same man," he says, "I am merely observing the guiding principle of this book." There at the end, he sees that his childish vision was the guiding vision. As he watches in memory the boy who, during his lessons, drew maps of imaginary countries, he realizes that

> today those hours stolen [so long ago] from mathematics and physics are for me as serious an endeavor as my present dreams of a civilization in which man will be freed from the servitude of Ulro. Once again, as in the past, I am sketching ideal realms, if not as maps on paper; and if I was then, at the age of twelve or thirteen, more concerned with preservation of the "natural environment," today my concern is rather with the "human environment."

Even more to the point of this essay, he realizes "not only that I was organizing space but that I was surmounting the present tense, because these were countries as they ought to have been" (*LU,* p. 273).

In a stroke, Milosz has defined the modern constructivist movement. And, as Michael Levenson claims (although all art is in some sense "didactic"), modernism, by virtue of its indirectness, allusiveness, and depth, embodies a "profounder didacticism."[33] By the same token, we may claim for Eliot's and Milosz' type of modernism a "profounder constructivism": on one level of art, constructivism simply aims to "articulate materials," to construct, rather than to cast, mold, or sculpt. But on the imaginative level, especially in architecture, where the constructivists tried to realize social ideals in materials, the movement became an art of the community. As Robert Hughes writes, we should not scoff because so few of the constructivists' plans for buildings were ever completed. We must remember that the plans were imaginative visions of what could be, and that their aim, to escape ideology and to devote art to "opening the passage from feeling to meaning" should not be forgotten.[34] So, in a sense, Milosz is a "constructivist." The materials to be "articulated" are time and space, and his ideal constructions take the form of a "homeland."

In Milosz' writing, yearning for homeland is literally and symbolically the central fact of existence. On one level, there is the yearning of the expatriate, Milosz himself; on a higher level, that of a

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Pole for an independent Poland; and on the highest, imaginative (that is, poetic-religious) level, the yearning to cease from "movement" (movement = life) and find ultimate peace and rest. As Milosz reminds the reader of *The Land of Ulro,* one of the Cabalist names for God is "Place." Thus, for Milosz, the "mind" is constructing and constructed—and for a purpose. To quote Blake again, to bring us back to the basic premise of Milosz' protest: "For every Space larger than a red blood Globule of Man's blood / Is visionary, and is created by the Hammer of Los." The great Spaces created by the visionaries of our tradition—the mind of Europe—have all been destroyed. Homer's Troy, the lovely citadel, Athens, the cradle of democracy, Virgil's Rome, Dante's Florence, Tennyson's Camelot, tragic Poland, all are constructions embodying "soul at war with sense." But, as Milosz reminds us, although they were destroyed by time and "sense," they were of the mind and their essential will to order will not vanish, if society remembers.

To return once more to "catastrophe": if science has given us the images for mass extermination, Milosz says, a reconstruction of science's images can deliver us. Relying on the premise that single aims destroy and multiple aims save, Milosz hopes for the dawning of a new science, based not upon linear Newtonian physics, which banishes the mind in a vast and endless universe, but upon an Einsteinian image, which makes time and space definite by relativity. As Milosz says, Einstein has re-created for mind a space it can inhabit. Yet, Milosz remains a catastrophist, because the world remains. Fact resists possession by the mind. But as a modern protest poet, a constructivist, he has hope: "If disintegration is a function of development, and development a function of disintegration, the race between them may very well end in the victory of disintegration. For a long time, but not forever—and here is where hope enters." Humanity is "an elemental force conscious of transcending Nature," he continues, "for it lives by memory of itself, that is, in History."[35]

Probably no other poem so well illustrates this notion of paired disintegration and development and also the warning to keep reconstructive memory alive as does "The Wormwood Star" from *The Separate Notebooks.* The title refers to the star that fell in *The Apocalypse of St. John the Apostle,* poisoning a third of the earth's waters and killing many people by making them bitter. Milosz makes a twentieth-century application by implying the total pollution seen by Dostoyevsky in *The Idiot*: the character Lebedyev asserts that the wormwood star's effect is

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"the whole tendency of the last few centuries in its general, scientific and materialistic entirety":

> Under the Wormwood star bitter rivers flowed.
> Man in the fields gathered bitter bread.
> No sign of divine care shone in the heavens.
> The century wanted homage from the dead.
>
> They traced their origin to the dinosaur
> And took their deftness from the lemur's paw.
> Above the cities of the thinking lichen,
> Flights of pterodactyls proclaimed the law.
>
> They tied the hands of man with barbed wire.
> And dug shallow graves at the edge of the wood.
> There would be no truth in his last testament.
> They wanted him anonymous for good.
>
> The planetary empire was at hand.
> They said what was speech and what was listening.
> The ash had hardly cooled after the great fire
> When Diocletian's Rome again stood glistening.

In Milosz' homeland, Poland, in a sense a country without a name, hope now seems to be dim. Despite the hopes of Solidarity and the Workers Defense Committee for a movement toward a "total national idea,"[36] the prospects of establishing a true community seem frustrated not only by the State's "monopoly of the means of violence" but its "seduction" of the "writing, intellectual, creative sector," actions that beget cowardly and selfish "maggots," as Jonathan Schell recently reported in a *New Yorker* essay.[37] Moreover, as Michael Kaufman has reported in a review essay, internecine warfare seems to exist among the resistance groups there: not only have "maggots" emerged, but, to use the words of a Warsaw intellectual, "the bedbugs have eaten the fleas."[38] Yet there is hope for development there, as Milosz has stated. The alliance of the intellectuals, workers, and Church in recent years seems promising, if, as Milosz maintains, the idea of a sentimental "Polishness" that is merely historical can be kept out of the movement.

Jonathan Schell's analysis of the movement toward the "total national idea" seems to be that underlying the intellectuals-and-Church alliance is a common foundation of "respect for the dignity and worth of the individual."[39] Though this "foundation" unites the "City of God" and the "City of Man," the principle underlying the reconstruction of a truly living Polish community is even more complex (we might use the phrase, "more multiple"). It is a controversial principle, so much so that one hesitates to say that its chief proponent in Poland speaks with the

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same voice as Milosz. Yet, though Adam Michnik, writing from prison, speaks of "compromise" with the state, he espouses a balance among temple, marketplace, and forum no less than Eliot did, or Milosz does. In his essays (being published by the University of California Press under the title *Letters from Prison and Other Essays*), Michnik speaks of "The New Evolutionism," which will enable Poles to establish a "real, day-to-day community of free people." Michnik does not believe that a revolution against a state that holds a "monopoly of the means of violence" can succeed, and, of course, a "seize the day" or quietistic mentality always leads to bad things. Moreover, the individual must have dignity, and for Michnik that means that he or she should have a life now rather than being degraded "today" for some "noble purpose 'in the future' "[40]

The way out of the impasse, he writes, is to establish what he calls a "hybrid" society "based on a compromise in which the government, while holding on to state power, would acknowledge and accept other, independent institutions in the society [such as those of the workers, intellectuals, and the Church]." Such a compromise may be effected by exercising tolerance, which dispenses with the "Maggots and Angels" opposition that unfortunately allows one to assign "all the evil to one's foes."[41] In "Little Gidding," such foes are said by Eliot to be "folded into a single party" when dead. Perhaps this is what Schell means when he says that Michnik "uses history to forgive the present." At any rate, Michnik in his "angerless wisdom" and tolerance seems to be seeking a balanced, "multiple-aim" society for Poland, seeking the realization of *metropolis* not in the "proverbial better tomorrow" but in "a better today."

In his *Warsaw Diary,* Kazimiez Brandy wrote that the "ultimate terror" of the Poles is that they will be forgotten. And that is Milosz' fear as well: as he asks in his "City without a Name," "Who will honor the city without a name, / So many being dead, and others in distant countries / Where they pan gold or deal in armaments?" And, in another poem, even more succinctly, "Where is the truth [and justice] of unremembered things?"[42]

In his Nobel Lecture, Milosz stated, "Those who are alive receive a mandate from those who are silent forever." We, the living, can fulfill our "duties only by trying to reconstruct precisely things as they were." We must remember the great cities with names—and keep alive the act of naming—to remain human. What does modernism, even in the "restricted" sense employed by this essay, offer, and, ultimately, what does Eliot's and Milosz' work mean? To borrow a statement that

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Tennessee Williams used to explain his work, "It means that if you do not watch out the apes will take over." Modernist Waste Lands seem so dark because they are painted from a catastrophist's perspective. Yet neither Eliot nor Milosz plays a Beckett-like "Endgame": as in any useful critique, what has been shown to be wrong contains within it an opposing argument that proposes a reconstruction, a rescue of the "polis." As modernist artists, Eliot and Milosz present not merely a "personal grouse" against "these bad days," but quite literally—we may say "topographically"—offer schemes for transforming society through imaginative synthesis.

[1] An excellent survey of the debate is Monique Chefdor's *Modernism: Challenges and Perspectives* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1986).

[2] Roger Shattuck, *The Innocent Eye* (New York: Farrar, 1984), pp. 328–41.

[3] Roger Shattuck, *New York Review of Books,* 18 Dec. 1986, pp. 68–74.

[4] Czeslaw Milosz, *The Land of Ulro,* trans. Louis Irribarne (New York: Farrar, 1984), pp. 46, 165. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as *LU.*

[5] Czeslaw Milosz, *New York Review of Books,* 5 May 1981, pp. 11–15; *The Land of Ulro,* p. 272.

[6] Milan Kundera, "The Tragedy of Central Europe," *New York Review of Books,* 26 Apr. 1984, p. 37.

[7] Richard Ellmann and Robert O'Clair, *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry* (New York: Norton, 1973), p. 6.

[8] Czeslaw Milosz, *The Witness of Poetry: The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, 1981–82* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1983), pp. 4, 11.

[9] *Ibid.,* pp. 109, 114.

[10] *Ibid.,* pp. 14–15.

[11] Czeslaw Milosz, *History of Polish Literature,* 2nd ed. (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1969), pp. 361–79.

[12] Milosz, *The Witness of Poetry,* pp. 34, 71.

[13] *Ibid.,* pp. 34–35.

[14] *Ibid.,* p. 104.

[15] In "Tradition and Individual Talent," *Selected Essays of T. S. Eliot* (London: Faber, 1935), p. 14; Milosz, *The Witness of Poetry,* p. 26.

[16] T. S. Eliot, *Notes toward a Definition of Culture* (London: Faber, 1948), p. 15; Milosz, *The Witness of Poetry,* p. 37; Milosz, *The Land of Ulro,* pp. 181, 215.

[17] Milosz, *The Witness of Poetry,* p. 33.

[18] *Ibid.,* p. 24.

[19] T. S. Eliot, *The Idea of a Christian Society* (New York: Harcourt, 1940), pp. 12–32.

[20] Eliot, *Selected Essays,* pp. 25–26.

[21] Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New* (New York: Random House, 1981), pp. 406, 212.

[22] Milosz, *The Witness of Poetry,* pp. 6, 106.

[23] *Ibid.,* pp. 8–9.

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[24] Czeslaw Milosz, *New York Review of Books,* 17 March 1983, p. 22.
[25] Nathan Gardels, "An Interview with Czeslaw Milosz," *New York Review of Books,* 26 Feb. 1986, p. 34.
[26] Kundera, "The Tragedy of Central Europe," p. 33.
[27] Michael Kaufman, "Writing, Politics, Bedbugs and Fleas in Poland," *International Herald Tribune,* 2 May 1986, pp. 9, 11.
[28] Joseph Brodsky, "A Room and a Half," *New York Review of Books,* 26 Feb. 1986, p. 47.
[29] Kaufman, "Writing, Politics . . . ," p. 9.
[30] Milosz, *The Witness of Poetry,* p. 5.
[31] Eliot, *Selected Essays,* p. 16.
[32] Milosz, *The Witness of Poetry,* p. 112.
[33] Michael Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984), pp. 65–66.
[34] Hughes, *The Shock of the New,* p. 409.
[35] Milosz, *The Witness of Poetry,* p. 116.
[36] Martin Malia, "Poland's Eternal Return," *New York Review of Books,* 29 Sept. 1983, p. 18.
[37] Jonathan Schell, "Reflections: A Better Today," *New Yorker,* 3 Feb. 1986, p. 65.
[38] Kaufman, "Writing, Politics . . . ," pp. 9–11.
[39] Schell, "Reflections," p. 62.
[40] *Ibid.,* pp. 60–62.
[41] *Ibid.,* pp. 55–65.
[42] Czeslaw Milosz, *The Separate Notebooks,* pp. 161, 67.

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Percival and the Porpoise: Woolf's Heroic Theme in *The Waves*

John F. Hulcoop

Whatever J. W. Graham says about *The Waves* Woolf scholars take seriously because he is, deservedly, the foremost authority on the text of Woolf's masterpiece (see *WHD*).[1] As epigraph to a 1983 article, Graham quotes Woolf's December 1930 diary (she is referring to *The Waves*): "the theme of effort, effort, dominates; not the waves; & personality; & defiance" (*VWD,* 3:339).[2] This theme Graham rechristens "the heroic theme," expressing surprise that he can "find no explicit reference to it in letters and plans written earlier" than December 1930. "If the heroic theme is dominant" (and the verb form of the diary-entry indicates that Woolf thought it was) "then its expression should certainly have affected Woolf's artistic strategy [for the novel as a whole] far earlier than the date of my epigraph" (*TCL,* p. 313). In the first section of his essay, Graham outlines his understanding of the heroic theme; in the second, he traces through Woolf's manuscript revisions her development of the theme; in the third, he asks "whether or not the heroic theme dominates *The Waves*." His answer is negative. Noting, quite correctly, that "critical commentary rarely treats the theme as central, when it treats it at all," he infers that Woolf herself must have been "wrong in her assessment of the theme's centrality" (*TCL,* p. 327).

The key-point in Graham's complex argument is that the novel's "symbolic *peripeteia*" (Bernard's appropriation of "the world of the interludes" in his summing up) fails. Woolf's narrative "is intended to achieve a flash point where its elements are fused, its tensions released, and its contradictions resolved" (*TCL,* p. 328). She intended this by making Bernard "Percival's successor [as hero], and by suggesting . . . the hero's liberation from time, his entry into another realm of being,

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and his return to time as the champion of his fellow men" (*TCL*, p. 327); but her intentions were defeated by the problematic nature of the interludes. Though Woolf wanted them to "serve both as bridge and background,"[3] Graham claims that she emphasizes "the background function of the interludes," playing down the parallels between episodes and interludes, and insisting on their further separation "physically in the text by spacing and different type-faces" (*TCL*, p. 329). She did so because she wanted the interludes to "render 'insensitive nature'" and because

> the critical adventure of the hero is his liberation from the self-as-Subject [rendered in the episodes] confronting the World-as-Object [rendered in the interludes]. If this [critical adventure] is to find imaginative form in narrative, then the World-as-Object must be given, as its prime imaginative reality, the sheer facticity of its otherness, so that there will be something there from which the hero can be freed. (*TCL*, p. 329)[4]

Unfortunately, says Graham, the interludes "render not 'insensitive nature' but the hypersensitive response to it of the anonymous Consciousness that narrates them." The consequence is that, far from liberating himself from Self-as-Subject and reversing the subjection of Self to World-as-Object (exemplified in Percival's death), Bernard "absorbs only another consciousness" (*TCL*, p. 329).

Furthermore, "the death of self" which Bernard must undergo if he is to achieve "integrity of being" (*TCL*, p. 316) is impossible in literary art because the death of self "involves the death of language as the defining medium of self, and so it cannot be narrated as a present event [as other events are], which means that it cannot occur in any of the previous episodes" (*TCL*, p. 330). The readers remain ignorant of "the fact that the entire summing up"—"in which the same old Bernard seems to be using the same old words"—"has been narrated from the perspective of Bernard's new being." At the novel's end, the hero continues to be a prisoner of time and "insensitive nature": he is like the "fin passing far out" (*VWD*, 3:113)[5] which Graham interprets as a vision of "unresolved tension between the two terms that demand each other, the creature and the medium in which it moves" (*TCL*, p. 330). It is, he concludes, a tragic vision of "the Creature-as-Subject contained within the World-as-Object, against which it must struggle and lose" (*TCL*, p. 331). This tragic "vision of the fin" rather than the heroic theme of transcendence ("a comic vision of desire fulfilled, of the quest completed") is what dominates *The Waves*.

But surely Graham is wrong and Woolf right. She did, after all,

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work on the novel for five years, making four complete drafts before she completed it in "a dashing manner" (*VWD,* 4:25), calling it "the most concentrated work I have ever done" (*VWD,* 4:28). The theme of effort, which is also the theme of personality and defiance,[6] does dominate *The Waves*; and not only *The Waves* but the entire Woolf canon from "Haworth, November, 1904" (which concludes, "however harsh the struggle, Emily, and Charlotte above all, fought to victory" [*VWE,* p. 8]) to "the Symbol" (in which a woman, describing a mountain, calls it "a symbol of effort" [*VWE,* pp. 282–84, 304–06]).[7] That Graham could find no explicit references to the heroic theme of effort earlier than December 1930 suggests only that he did not search widely enough. References to, images for, and discussions of this theme exist in essays, stories, novels, letters, and diaries long before that date. Recalling her mother in 1908, Woolf states that Julia Stephen "contrived to invest the whole scene [of life] with an inimitable bravery as though she saw it composed . . . a vast procession on the march to death." Her nature "fitted her to deal victoriously with such matters," but she also had "a deep sense of the futility of all effort, the mystery of life" (*MB,* pp. 35–36). Woolf imagines her thinking of Leslie Stephen's "keen intellect" as "always voyaging . . . alone in ice-bound seas. Her pride in it was like the pride of one in some lofty peak": a symbol of effort, we recall (*MB,* p. 37). Woolf's first Mrs. Dalloway looks forward to Bernard and his view of life as "'perpetual warfare'" (*W,* p. 295) when she asks Helen Ambrose if she does not feel that "'life's a perpetual conflict?'" (*TVO,* p. 45). Near the end of the same novel, Mrs. Flushing again anticipates Bernard: "She hated death; she was furious, outraged, indignant with death, as if it were a living creature. She refused to relinquish her friends to death. She would not submit to dark and nothingness" (*TVO,* p. 438).

This refusal to be vanquished by death, this defiance of "dark and nothingness," is the heart of Woolf's heroic theme, and indistinguishable from the theme of effort since it takes not only courage but also enormous effort not to surrender. It is also closely related to Woolf's interest in the Elizabethans and their literature which, in turn, derives from her ongoing attachment to Thoby Stephen and his memory.[8] "Dead ere his prime," Woolf's brother was the barely hidden subject of her "elegy for past youth and past summers" in *Jacob's Room* (p. 168) and a major source of inspiration for *The Waves*: "I must record . . . the end of The Waves . . . I have been sitting here these 15 minutes . . . thinking of Thoby & if I could write Julian Thoby Stephen 1881–1906 on the first page" (*VWD,* 4:10). Thoby it was who pressed Woolf to read

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Shakespeare,[9] thus inaugurating her lifelong love affair with "The Strange Elizabethans": "There are few greater delights than to go back three hundred years and become in fancy at least an Elizabethan" (*CR2*, p. 9). The first Elizabethan Woolf "became" in print was Sir Walter Raleigh, one of the "old voyagers" she loved for the poetry fostered in them "by long days at sea . . . and the lonely effort in the face of death" (*GR*, p. 164). Raleigh's memory, like her own, "is haunted by the sound of the sea."[10] From the sea he takes his most frequent and splendid imagery. . . . But although the sounds of life and the waves of the sea are constantly in his ears," Raleigh is also concerned with "the passing of time and the uncertainty of the human lot. . . . The thought of death tolls all through Elizabethan literature" (*GR*, pp. 164–65). Making them sound much like herself, Woolf claims that

> to the Elizabethans a great part of the proper conduct of life consisted in meeting the idea of death, which to them was not an idea but a person, with fortitude, and to Raleigh, in particular, death was a very definite enemy. . . . And at last, when he has taken the idea of death to him and triumphed over it, there rises from his lips that magnificent strain of reconciliation and acknowledgement. . . . "O eloquent, just and mightie Death! whom none could advise, thou hast perswaded; what none hath dared, thou hast done." (*GR*, p. 166)

More significant than his role as mentor is Thoby Stephen's acting (along with Herbert Duckworth) as prototype for one of the most powerful symbols in Woolf's work: the magnanimous hero on horseback who takes definitive form in *Night and Day* (1916–18), and then gallops through all the novels from *Jacob's Room* to *Between the Acts*, as well as through essays, stories, letters, and diaries.[11] "How gallantly she takes her fences," Woolf declared while working on *Jacob's Room* (*VWD*, 2:17), thus making clear that the magnanimous hero is as often a woman as he is a man.[12] Other female models for this archetype (in addition to Woolf's mother) were Vita Sackville-West, endowed with "all the dash and courage of the aristocracy" (*VWD*, 2:313) and Ethel Smyth, who was not afraid to say of herself that she was a very brave woman. "It is a quality I adore. And I have it," Woolf added (*VWD*, 3:325–26). After praising Dame Ethel as a "pathmaker" in the professions for women, Woolf designates her the modern equivalent of cavalry: an armored tank *"who climbed the rough ground, drew the enemies* [sic] *fire. . . . I never know whether to be angry that such heroism was needed, or glad that such heroism was shown"* (*TP*, p. xxvii). Woolf's concept of magnanimous hero is repeatedly related to her vision of the "fin passing

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far out" in her 1923 diary. One evening, Woolf set out to meet her husband, who was en route from London to Rodmell. Somehow, she missed him, but went on searching for some time, hoping they would encounter:

> What an intensity of feeling was packed into those hours! It was a wet windy night; & as I walked back across the field I said Now I am meeting it; now the old devil has once more got his spine through the waves. . . . Reality, so I thought, was unveiled. And there was something noble in feeling like this; tragic, not at all petty. . . . Off I rode, without much time, against such a wind; & again I had a satisfaction in being matched with powerful things, like wind and dark. I battled. . . . (*VWD,* 2:270)

The "old devil" who heaves his back through the waves, thus displaying his back and/or dorsal fin, is sometimes and somehow connected to Woolf's old enemy, Death; his presence is, therefore, potentially tragic. Woolf suggests the connection in a letter to Gwen Raverat when she writes of Thoby's and Jacques' deaths as "the devil," exhorting Gwen to help her "polish off that demon" (*VWL,* 3:180). The exhortation is to heroic effort. And, in 1923, Woolf made that effort by riding off into the dark (presumably on her bicycle, though she makes no mention of it, and it might just as well be a horse we infer from the context). In opposing herself to "powerful things, like wind and dark," she assumes the mantle of the magnanimous hero.

Noble (though not simply aristocratic), courageous, defiant of death and darkness, Woolf's equestrian hero leads us circuitously through the figure of Shelley who was "a champion riding out against the forces of superstition and brutality with heroic courage"[13] to that of Percival (read "Thoby") and, through him, to Bernard. Beyond them, he leads to the lowbrow—"a man or a woman of thoroughbred vitality who [like Percival] rides his body in pursuit of a living at a gallop across life"—and to the highbrow—"the man or woman of thoroughbred intelligence who [like Bernard] rides his mind at a gallop across country in pursuit of an idea" (*DM,* pp. 113–14). Woolf's hero concept is as complex as her attitude toward him/her (Leslie Stephen/Ethel Smyth for example) is ambivalent. The lowbrow of monolithic physique, like Thoby and Percival, can easily become a bully and a tyrant.[14] The highbrow hero, like Desmond MacCarthy and Bernard, can easily become a snob or, worse, an academic whose narrow focus of mind and overspecialization Woolf loathed and rejected.[15] All of which returns us to the vision of the fin because it, too, takes many forms and provokes diverse responses with opposite yet complementary meanings. As the

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synecdoche implies, the "fin passing far out" is much too slippery to suffer itself to be netted in a simple, single-minded interpretation (that is, tragic).

On the one hand, the fin can and does appear as the spine of a submarine creature breaking surface, a menacing symbol of dissolution and death. The "old devil" who gets his spine through the waves in the 1923 diary-entry is obviously first cousin to the sea-monster Neville conjures in *The Waves*. Meditating most significantly on how to read a text, Neville knows that it cannot be done " 'without effort' ":

> To read this poem one must have a myriad eyes, like one of those lamps that turns on slabs of racing water at midnight in the Atlantic, when perhaps only a spray of seaweed pricks the surface, or suddenly the waves gape and up shoulders a monster. One must put aside antipathies and jealousies and not interrupt. One must have patience and infinite care. . . . Nothing is to be rejected in fear or horror. (*W*, p. 216)

Even though, metaphorically, the sudden appearance of such a spiny monster may threaten the reader with chaos and darkness—meaninglessness and incomprehension—he must not fear or reject such disruptive elements in the text; rather, he must be patient and keep his myriad eyes open because, on the other hand, the fin that breaks " 'the leaden waste of waters' " (*W*, p. 268) may just as easily prove to be that of a porpoise, most renowned of nature's playful mammals, also called a dolphin—Woolf's pet name for her sister, Vanessa, the one person who mattered to her as much as Leonard (*VWL*, 1:509; 4:390).[16] " 'I see far out a waste of waters. A fin turns. This bare visual impression is unattached to any line of reason, it springs up as one might see the fin of a porpoise on the horizon' " (*W*, pp. 205–06).[17] This is the fin that breaks, that is, defeats, triumphs over, the "leaden waste" and is associated quite specifically with imagination, with the words that give voice to what the mind imagines thus breaking the silence of nothingness, the absence of meaning which for Woolf, as for Bernard, is more truly death than the death of youth and friends. In his summing up, Bernard reflects on those occasions when, after sharing with someone our insight into Shakespeare, we " 'sink into one of those silences which are now and then broken by a few words, as if a fin rose in the wastes of silence' " (*W*, pp. 298–99). The novelist, says Woolf elsewhere, desires

> to be as unconscious as possible. He wants life to proceed with the utmost quiet and regularity . . . so that nothing may break the illusion . . . disturb the flow . . . interrupt the mysterious nosings

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> about, feelings round, darts and dashes and sudden discoveries of that very shy and illusive [sic] fish the imagination. (*TP*, p. xxxvii)

Who can doubt that this is the fish Woolf referred to when, fifteen minutes after finishing *The Waves,* she crowed, "I have netted that fin in a waste of waters which appeared to me [five years ago] over the marshes out of my window at Rodmell when I was coming to an end of To The Lighthouse" (*VWD,* 4:10)?

Woolf's struggle to land that fish, to net those words spawned in the depths of her imagination, is the primary episode in her thematic treatment of heroic effort. It was also a part of her own courageous refusal to surrender to the silence of darkness and death: "I will not yield an inch or a fraction, so long as something remains" (*VWD,* 5:105). Most often that something was her art: "writing is effort; writing is despair," she recorded in 1933, when she was wrestling with *The Partigers.* Only a week earlier she had told herself, "the thing is to be venturous, bold, to take every possible fence" (another allusion to the magnanimous hero on horseback [*VWD,* 4:161]). A year later, and still locked in combat with that Lernaean Hydra which had transformed itself into *Here and Now* (and would go through five more transformations before becoming *The Years*), Woolf wrote "this needs constant effort, anxiety and risk" (*VWD,* 4:233). Invited to write a biography of Roger Fry before she had finished *The Years,* she posed the critical question: "Another book. Have I the indomitable courage to start another?" (*VWD,* 4:335). And in fact she had the courage not only to finish *The Years* (a five-year effort), but also to write *Three Guineas* before beginning *Roger Fry.*

Woolf's success in writing and completing work after work earned her a living, a large measure of content ("Nobody shall say of me that I have not known perfect happiness" [*VWD,* 3:8–9]), as well as a prominent place in the history of English literature which she loved above almost everything. This being so, I find it difficult to confine my interpretation of Woolf's fin-vision to the tragic. In landing her fish she *was* completing her quest, fulfilling her heart's desire, and offering her readers a comic vision equal in power to the tragic: like Shakespeare, after the ostensible death of Falstaff and the heroic death of Hotspur, resurrecting his comic spirit as "the true and perfect image of life indeed" (*1 Henry 1V.,* V.iv.120–21)—which is what I take Bernard finally to be.

Graham argues that first-person narration of the death of self is impossible in literary art because it necessitates the death of language,

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self's defining medium. Logically, Bernard can do nothing once such a death has occurred; it cannot, therefore, be included as a present event in any of the eight episodes that precede the summing up or, consequently, be recovered from the past by Bernard in his summing up; it cannot, in fact, be narrated. Yet Bernard, speaking from a point in time *after* the death of self narrated in the summing up, goes back to a point preceding the "death" and tells the story of his life not only up to and including the death of self, but beyond it. In Graham's view, this is illogical. He argues that, "since the same old Bernard seems to be using the same old words" in his summing up, he cannot have changed and so the reader must remain ignorant of what has (supposedly) happened to Bernard, and blind to the novel perspective "supplied by Bernard's new being"—until, of course, the reader actually reads the death-of-self incident toward the end of the summing up. But the major premise here is false. The death of self Bernard narrates, not once but many times, is *a figurative event*: thinking about *The Waves,* Woolf makes a note of "some semi mystic very profound life . . . which shall all be told on one occasion," as in Bernard's summing up, her "theory being that the actual event practically does not exist—nor time either" (*VWD,* 3:118). Certainly, literal death guarantees a death of letters uttered and written.[18] After the final inverted commas at the end of his final sentence, Bernard falls silent. The last six words of the novel belong to the voice of "one of the invisible presences who . . . play so important a part in every life" (*MB,* p. 80): the voice of the italicized text belongs (and here I hazard a guess) to " 'the woman who sat at a table writing' " (*W,* p. 135). She is one of those " 'fabulous presences' " (*W,* p. 312) whom Bernard first encounters as a child in his imagined adventure with Susan at Elvedon. Here, in the first episode, barely fifteen pages into the novel, Bernard experiences (though without realizing it at the time) the first death of self which *is* narrated as a present event and *is* recovered from the past (as follows) in Bernard's summing up:

> "I then first became aware of the presence of those enemies who change but are always there; the forces we fight against. To let oneself be carried on passively is unthinkable. . . . So, 'Let's explore,' I cried, and jumped up, and ran downhill with Susan and saw the stable-boy clattering about the yard. . . . Down below, through the depths of leaves, the gardeners swept the lawns with great brooms. The lady sat writing. Transfixed, stopped dead, I thought, 'I cannot interfere with a single stroke of those brooms. They sweep and sweep. Nor with the fixity of that woman writing.' It is strange that one cannot stop gardeners sweeping nor dislodge a woman. There they have remained all my life. It is

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> as if one had woken in Stonehenge surrounded by a circle of great stones, these enemies, these presences." (*W*, p. 263)[19]

In the actual Elvedon episode, Bernard tries to comfort the unhappy Susan by telling her stories. Story-telling (narrating) is Bernard's primary role. Playing with words and phrases to divert other people, Bernard is most himself, most secure in his ego. Thus occupied, he can take his self for granted and allow himself to drift into what he will later call "'the sunless territory of non-identity'" (*W*, p. 126). Comforting Susan, Bernard says, "'when we sit close together . . . we melt into each other with phrases. We are edged with mist. We make an unsubstantial territory'" (*W*, pp. 14–15). The danger which Bernard only later understands is that he will let himself "'be carried on [so] passively'" that he will lose himself entirely, cease to exist as an individual, as himself, Bernard. At this point he is stung into action, self-assertion, by the presence of enemies; he leaps up and cries "Let's explore"—a cry that later becomes "Fight, fight!" Here, we are at the very heart of the matter.

Clearly, the Elvedon death is both figurative and prefigurative, a metaphor for all future losses of identity. And in fact the basic structure of *The Waves* is a series of recurring cycles in each of which identity is lost and regained: "These are the true cycles, these are the true events" (*W*, p. 201). In each cycle, Bernard moves from a state of contented unself-consciousness in which ego-identity is taken for granted, through a state of anxiety in which identity is threatened with annihilation, or lost, back to a contented taking-for-granted of the reasserted identity. The threat of identity-loss gives rise to acute anxiety synonymous with the fear of death. Anxiety is followed by the enormous effort necessary to recall and reestablish self, often in an act of self-assertion that may become aggressive. Courage is also called for, since the effort to reactivate self must be made in the full consciousness of the fact that in the biological world individual identity will be annihilated by death. This process, referred to by Woolf in her notebooks for *The Waves*,[20] is exactly what underlies one of Bernard's most perceptive statements about himself, a statement that again refers the reader back to the Elvedon episode. Filled as he is with words and phrases (breath), Bernard's most ebullient self is compared to "'a balloon that sails over tree-tops'" (*W*, p. 128). In the Elvedon episode, Susan, who sees herself "'tied down with single words,'" implies the (as yet unformulated) balloon image by saying of Bernard, "'you wander off; you slip away; you rise up higher, with words and words in phrases'" (*W*, p. 15). At the farewell dinner party for Percival, Bernard, pondering his repeated

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losses of self, alludes to the balloon image and the Elvedon episode: "'Susan, staring at the string that slips in and out among the leaves of the beech trees, cries: "He is gone! He has escaped me!" For there is nothing to lay hold of. I am made and remade continually'" (*W*, p. 145).

The only death of self (so far as Graham is concerned) occurs late in Bernard's life, later than the period covered in the preceding episodes. In this particular cycle, Bernard calls on the self he has learned to take for granted—"'the self who had been with me in many tremendous adventures; the faithful man . . . who has been so mysteriously and with sudden accretions of being built up'"—and the self makes no answer. "'He threw up no opposition. He attempted no phrase. . . . Nothing came, nothing. I cried . . . Now there is nothing. No fin breaks the waste of this immeasurable sea'" (*W*, pp. 310–11). Though Bernard, in his anxiety and despair, is convinced that life is now over (as he has been after the death of Percival [*W*, p. 292]), that this experience of speechlessness (his self attempts "'no phrases . . . no varied words'") "'is more truly death than the death of friends, than the death of youth'" (*W*, p. 311), he nevertheless proceeds in utterly characteristic fashion to make a simile: "'It was like an eclipse,'" and then he elaborates the eclipse as an analogy for his most recent experience of identity-loss.

The death of language that Graham argues must be consequent upon the death of self is also figurative and so can be figured. The recovery of identity, which remains a psychological mystery to Bernard though he can and does describe it, is homologous to rebirth; and, every time it happens, Bernard feels, not speechless, but "'unable to speak *save in a child's words of one syllable*'" (*W*, p. 314; italics added). On one subsequent and four previous occasions, the same feeling finds its way into words (*W*, pp. 323, 155, 201, 261, 287–88); but not until the six monosyllables of the novel's last sentence will Bernard's need for "'a little language'" such as children and lovers use be fulfilled. On this supreme moment, Garrett Stewart's commentary is by far the most illuminating:

> the long-coveted "words of one syllable" at last provided, they turn self-consciously scriptive even in their own half-mimetic typography, tilted on the line, cursive, curled. With them, if not in them, death as closure is discovered to be nothing more or less than the world suddenly without self, voiced in those omniscient, almost corporealized and autonomous italics into which the novelist's own phrases—Bernard's, Virginia's [those of the

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fabulous "'woman writing'"]—seem to have been merged, subsumed.[21]

In the death-as-eclipse are implied *all* the previous cycles in which identity has died and been reborn. Calling on the self who fails to come, Bernard refers to him as "'the man who has collected himself in moments of emergency and banged his spoon on the table saying, "I will not consent"' " (*W*, pp. 310–11). These words instantly recover from the past the Reunion Dinner at Hampton Court (Episode 8). "'Gorged and replete, solid with middle-aged content,'" and having drunk enough wine to blunt "'the sharp tooth of egotism,'" Bernard drifts off into silence, losing himself in the imagined abysses of space and time (*W*, pp. 245–46). Recalled to the here and now by the clock ticking, a car hooting and "'the memory of [his] nose'" which maybe itches, Bernard says: "'I rise; "Fight," I cry, "fight!" . . . and strike with this spoon upon this table pugnaciously'" (*W*, p. 246. See also pp. 306, 310–11). The double imperative, "Fight, fight!" rapidly moves us even further back in time to an incident narrated only in the summing up but located chronologically in or just after Episode 5. After Percival's death, Bernard visits first Jinny (*W*, p. 171) and, later, Susan (*W*, p. 293). Waiting at the station for the train back to London, Bernard is confronted by "'the stupidity of nature'" (*W*, p. 294 ff.). The temptation is to "surrender," letting his individuality be overwhelmed by a sense of dullness, by the nothingness concealed by the leaves of the trees: "'Thus if I had a stick with which to point to indentations in the curve of being, this is the lowest; here it coils useless on the mud where no tide comes . . .'" (*W*, p. 294).

This, then, is the nadir of Bernard's existence, the point at which the tide of life is farthest out and the presence of absence annihilating: another death of self. Thinking back further still, Bernard sees again "'the figures beneath the beech trees at Elvedon. The gardeners swept; the lady at the table sat writing'" (*W*, p. 294). At that time, "'when I was a child, the presence of an enemy had asserted itself; the need for opposition had stung me. I had jumped up and cried, "Let's explore." The horror of the situation was ended'" (*W*, p. 294). But waiting at the station, staring at leaves, trees, and stupid sheep, seduced into natural nothingness, Bernard feels helpless: nothing exists, no situation he can struggle against and so end. Looking back from the vantage point of old age (in the summing up), Bernard recovers not only the first death of self that occurred at Elvedon but all subsequent deaths. And he understands, as he remembers waiting at the symbolic station, the full significance of Percival's death (only partly comprehended when it

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happens): "'I now made the contribution of maturity to childhood's intuitions—satiety and doom; the sense of what is unescapable in our lot; death; the knowledge of limitations; how life is more obdurate than one had thought it'" (*W*, p. 294).

How and why does Bernard escape from this black hole of ego-annihilation? The only answer (apart from that implied in the last-quoted clause) is that which he gives when he visits Jinny after Percival's death. Because she "'respects the moment with complete integrity,'" Jinny (a diminutive of Virginia) confirms the "'disillusioned clarity'" of Bernard's perceptions, and his "'determination—not to let the lilies grow,'" synonymous with "'the universal determination to go on living'" (*W*, pp. 290–91). This determination is what enables him to know, as he waits at the station, that "'if you hold a blunt blade [analogous to the "blunted tooth of egotism"] to a grindstone long enough, something spurts—a jagged edge of fire'" (*W*, p. 295). So he simply persists (it takes effort and courage) in holding the blunted blade of his own perceptions "'to lack of reason, aimlessness, the usual'" (*W*, p. 295)—and out spurts the flame of contempt:

> "I jumped up. I said, 'Fight! Fight!' I repeated. It is the effort and the struggle, it is the perpetual warfare, it is the shattering and piecing together—this is the daily battle, defeat or victory, the absorbing pursuit. The trees, scattered, put on order; the thick green of the leaves thinned itself to a dancing light. I netted them [picking up the fin image] under with a sudden phrase. I retrieved them from formlessness with words. (*W*, p. 295)

This is the most explicit statement of the heroic theme of effort in *The Waves*. It is no accident, surely, that Bernard's words derive from Woolf's 1929 diary and express, in addition to Bernard's determination to continue, the extra-fictional view of "the woman writing": she whose "daily battle" against the nothingness of the natural world cost her great effort and whose "absorbing pursuit" was to reticulate form and meaning in the playful words and phrases of her "very difficult art" (*VWD*, 4:156).

Feeling, in October 1929, "a little strained & surrounded with silence"—as ominous a state for Woolf as for Bernard—Woolf thought that nobody could know what "inner loneliness" she suffered just "walking up this street, engaged with my anguish, as I was after Thoby died—alone; fighting something alone. But then I had the devil to fight"—the familiar old devil who got his spine through the waves in 1923—"& now nothing," exactly like Bernard sinking into the silent stupidity of nature and having nothing but nothing to fight:

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> On the whole, I do not much mind; because, what I like is to flash & dash from side to side, goaded on by what I call reality. If I never felt these extraordinarily pervasive strains . . . I should float down into acquiescence. Here is something to fight: & when I wake early I say to myself, Fight, fight. If I could catch the feeling, I would: the feeling of the singing of the real world; the sense that comes to me of being bound on an adventure. . . . And this curious steed of life; is genuine. (*VWD,* 3:259–60)

What Garrett Stewart says of the final sentence in *The Waves* is even more true of Bernard's "Fight! Fight!" passage: "The novelist's own phrases—Bernard's, Virginia's—seem to have been merged." Like Bernard with Susan, so Woolf with Bernard: " 'we melt into each other with phrases. . . . We make an unsubstantial territory.' " And, like her protagonist at the end of *The Waves,* Woolf assumes once again the mantle of the magnanimous hero, resisting the temptation to "float down into acquiescence." Rising up, she exclaims "Fight! Fight!" and rides out on that curious but genuine "steed of life" to battle once more the silence of inner loneliness which, for Woolf as for Bernard, is a kind of death.

Like Woolf, Bernard is goaded on by reality: "the usual." The forces, presences, and enemies of which he repeatedly speaks might be regarded as agents provocateurs inciting him to action (the action of writing-narrating in which he/she was most fully him-/herself) and precipitating a return of the ego through self-assertion. This explains why Mrs. Dalloway thinks "with a rush; Kilman was her enemy. That was satisfying; that was real. . . . She hated her; she loved her. It was enemies one wanted, not friends" (*MD,* pp. 265–66). That Woolf felt the same, popular opinion to the contrary, can easily be documented. "I value blame. It spurs one," she wrote when *The Times* critic called one of her stories "pretentious" (*VWD,* 2:30). And "dashed by the reception of [her] Conrad conversation," published in 1923, she countered: "Never mind; to be dashed is always the most bracing treatment for me. A cold douche should be taken (and generally is) before the beginning of a book. . . . It has the effect of making me more definite and outspoken in my style" (*VWD,* 2:265)—more self-assertive. "When Lytton [Strachey] picks holes [in *Mrs. Dalloway*], I get back into my working fighting mood. I like the sense of effort better" (*VWD,* 3:32). In Woolf's life, as in her fiction, the theme of effort dominates.

Two points remain to be made in this questioning of Graham's rejection of Woolf's own assessment of *The Waves,* and they are connected: the nature of the relationship between interludes and

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episodes, and between the comic and the tragic rhythms in life which Woolf heard as "the singing of the real world." "It is a common place of criticism that comedy tends to deal with characters in a social group, whereas tragedy is more concentrated on a single individual."[22] Equally well established is the idea of "vital continuity" as the characteristic rhythm of comedy, which celebrates the "permanence and typicality of human experience, as projected in persistent social species whose sufficient destiny is simply to go on revealing themselves to us"[23]—which is exactly what the soliloquizing characters do in *The Waves*; and the idea of tragedy as closed and passional, "concerned with last things, with death, the meaning of life as a whole"[24]—which is the subject of Bernard's summing up.

The rhythm of comedy is, essentially, a falling-rising rhythm (as Dante's magnum opus demonstrates); that of tragedy is a rising-falling rhythm (as the "dying fall" of the music that appeals to Duke Orsino, that would-be tragic hero, tends to suggest). Woolf told Ethel Smyth, on August 19, 1930, that she was writing *The Waves* "to a rhythm" (*VWL,* 4:204); next day she recorded that she was trying to keep her characters' soliloquies "running homogeneously in & out, in the rhythm of the waves" (*VWD,* 3:312): " 'the incessant rise and fall and fall and rise again' " (*W,* p. 325); a rising-falling-rising rhythm, *both* tragic *and* comic. Whereas the intense subjectivity of each soliloquy concentrates attention on a single individual, as in tragedy, the succession of soliloquies creates the illusion of characters in a social group, as in comedy. Within the human and social world of the episodes, death comes as the end to the individual—to Percival, Rhoda, and Bernard, whose lives are also representative; within the interludes, the vital continuity of existence is affirmed beyond the limitations (acknowledged by Bernard while waiting at the station) of the single life cycle.

Furthermore, the perpetual motion of the solar cycle—light breaking, fading into darkness and breaking again—which closely parallels the tidal cycle—of waves breaking on the shore, withdrawing as the tide recedes, and breaking on the shore again—begins in the first *interlude* but begins again in the final *episode*. Twelve paragraphs before his last, Bernard, " 'taking upon [him] the mystery of *things*' " (*W,* p. 319; italics added), says, " 'Day rises; the girl lifts the watery fire-hearted jewels to her brow; the sun levels his beams at the sleeping house. . . .'"

The entire paragraph strings together words and phrases culled from the first three interludes. In addition, the movement within the first interlude—from unconsciousness (the waves sigh *"like a sleeper whose breath comes and goes unconsciously"* [*W,* p. 5]) to consciousness—

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prefigures the cyclical movement of lost and regained identity that recurs from episode to episode. "Who was it said, through the unconscious comes the conscious, & then again to the unconscious?" (*VWD,* 4:282–83). Whoever it was provided an alternative set of terms with which to narrate the homologous sun-tide-identity cycles: loss of identity is equatable with absence (tide out), darkness, and unconsciousness.

Parallel and superimposed, episodes and interludes work together like a pair of stereoscopic pictures to bestow a three-dimensionality on Woolf's vision which is made audible as "the singing of the real world." Through Bernard, who is the porpoise of imagination (as playful in the element of words and phrases as the porpoise is in water) rather than the shark-like fin of death and dissolution, Woolf constantly modifies the romantic idealism of Neville and Louis (both of whom are intensely single-minded) and the romantic agony of Susan and Rhoda (who are intensely self-absorbed). This modification is most obvious in Bernard's response to Percival's death which is in direct contrast to Neville's and Rhoda's. Having felt personal sorrow and wept, Bernard quickly places Percival's death in the larger context of life in general: " 'I should be able to place him in trifling and ridiculous situations, so that *he* may not feel absurd, perched on a great horse. I must be able to say, "Percival is a ridiculous name" ' " (*W,* pp. 166–67. Italics added to emphasize Bernard's compassionate nature).

Reenacting his response to Percival's death in his summing up, Bernard relives the temptation to surrender to a single-minded view of life as tragic:[25] " 'Sitting alone, it seems we are spent; our waters can only just surround feebly that spike of sea-holly; we cannot reach that further pebble so as to wet it. It is over, we are ended' " (*W,* p. 292). Preoccupied as he is with last things, with the attempt to sum up the meaning of life as a whole, Bernard intends to come to rest in Percival's death: " 'Should this be the end of the story? a kind of sigh? [picking up the sigh of the unconscious sleeper in Interlude 1] a last ripple of the wave?' " (*W,* p. 292) He will experience the same temptation when he confronts the stupidity of nature at the railway station; *again* at Hampton Court, when his self-consciousness streams away " 'mixed with Susan, Jinny, Neville, Rhoda, Louis, [in] a sort of death' " (*W,* pp. 305–06); *again* when he visits the hairdresser and feels he has become part of the " 'unfeeling universe' " (*W,* p. 307); *again* in the eclipse as death-of-self incident (" 'This is more truly death . . .' "); *again* in the restaurant, telling his life story to a stranger and succumbing to the illusion that his ego has been extinguished, " 'lies deep, tideless, immune

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. . . the man I called "Bernard"' " (*W,* p. 318); and yet again, after the stranger has left, when Bernard rejoices in solitude (for the first time in his life), believing that he has "'done with phrases,'" that silence is better (*W,* p. 323). *But*—and that adversative conjunction is the crucial word that marks each successive peripeteia—"'But wait . . . an impulse again runs through us; we rise, we toss back a mane of white spray; we pound on the shore; we are not to be confined. . . . I shaved and washed . . . had breakfast . . . went out to earn my living. After Monday, Tuesday comes'" (*W,* pp. 292–93).

Thus Bernard resists the temptation to acquiesce, to end tragically with Percival's death; in words and phrases that will recur in the final paragraph of his monologue (in which he will, like Percival, like Raleigh, and like Woolf herself, defy death), Bernard gets up as he "must" and goes on in a manner that can only, in literary terms, be called comic.[26] Bernard's initial response to Percival's death, his recalling of the event in this summing up, and his reenactment of it in the final paragraph of the novel all insist on the "vital continuity" of life (rather than the finality of death), on "'the eternal renewal, the incessant rise and fall and fall and rise again'" (*W,* p. 325) which is the comic rhythm.

We are compelled to view the death of Bernard as we have come to view the loss of identity, not in a context that terminates in loss or ends with the exit of an individual, but rather in one that juxtaposes loss with regaining, the death of one with the life of many: "'Such is the incomprehensible combination,' said Bernard, 'such is the complexity of things, that as I descend . . . I do not know which is sorrow, which joy. My son is born; Percival is dead . . . but which is sorrow, which is joy?'" (*W,* p. 165). As Louis observes, "'Percival has died (he died in Egypt; he died in Greece; all deaths are one death)'" (*W,* p. 184). For Bernard, the emphasis falls differently and he proclaims that all lives are one life, "'our life, our identity'" (*W,* p. 304): "'we are not single, we are one.'" His own death he sees as part of "'another day, another Friday; another twentieth of March, January or September. Another general *awakening*'" (*W,* p. 324; italics added).

This ending in awakening must be set beside the beginning in sleep: with the *"sleeper whose breath comes and goes unconsciously"* we began, and must begin again, as we end. The final sentence, *"The waves broke on the shore,"* has to be read two ways at once. As I suggested earlier, the solar cycle moves from light *breaking* to light *breaking*: the verb has comic as well as tragic (*broken* on the wheel) implications. Bernard confirms

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this fact when he says, " 'There is a sense of the break of day. I will not call it dawn' " (*W*, p. 324).

And what, finally, of that hero with the ridiculous name who stands *and* falls at the center of the novel? Where did Woolf find him and why did she choose him? She found him not only in her brother, who died tragically young, but also in Wagner's last great music drama, *Parsifal*.[27] And she chose him because he is "the innocent fool enlightened through compassion."[28] What Bernard says of Percival—" 'he had . . . great compassion' " (*W*, p. 169)—is also true of himself. Parsifal's first quest, embodied in Percival, ends tragically in failure; but his second, embodied in Bernard, ends in triumph, a divine comedy, because he has been enlightened through compassion. Bernard is characterized by his fellow feeling, his participation in the sufferings of others: it is his sympathy for Susan that precipitates the Elvedon adventure. Reluctant " 'to assume the burden of individual life' " (*W*, p. 121), identifying himself always with the Chorus (*W*, p. 256), and wanting to " 'embrace the whole world with the arms of understanding,' " Bernard is the least single-minded or self-absorbed of the characters in *The Waves*. If Percival represents courage, Bernard represents "unegotism," and Woolf considered these two among the prime human virtues.

Still a schoolboy, Louis expresses the hope that " 'he will achieve in [his] life . . . some gigantic amalgamation between the two discrepancies so hideously apparent to [him]' " (*W*, p. 56). Though Louis fails, he can be compared—perhaps surprisingly—with Emile Brontë, another of Woolf's magnanimous heroes, who

> looked out upon a world cleft into gigantic disorder and felt within her the power to unite it in a book. That gigantic ambition is to be felt throughout the novel—a struggle, half thwarted but of superb conviction, to say something which is not "I love" [the utterance at the heart of a comedy] or "I hate" [the utterance that confronts the tragic hero] but "we, the whole human race" [identified with Bernard in the episodes] and "you, the eternal powers [depicted in the interludes] . . ." the sentence is unfinished. It is not strange that it should be so; rather it is astonishing that she can make us feel what she had it in her to say at all. (*CR1*, p. 164)

I know of only two novels in English literature that manage, miraculously, to combine both tragic and comic cycles: one is *Tristram Shandy*, the other *Wuthering Heights*, and both were favorites of Woolf. A third title should be added to that very short list on the grounds that in it, too (and only as a consequence of the author's heroic effort), a potentially tragic

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hero is subsumed by comic Chorus, by "the laughter of the Dolphins" (*VWL*, 1:282), the play of porpoises, Bernard and Virginia. Its title is, of course, *The Waves*.

[1] The following is a list of editions of Woolf works referred to in the text, together with the abbreviation used: *The Voyage Out* (London: Hogarth, 1929), *TVO*; *Jacob's Room* (London: Hogarth, 1945), *JR*; *Mrs. Dalloway* (New York: Harcourt, 1925), *MD*; *The Waves* (London: Hogarth, 1931), *W*; *Virginia Woolf/The Waves/The two holograph drafts,* Transcribed and edited by John W. Graham (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1976), *WHD*; *The Pargiters/The Novel-Essay Portion of* The Years, ed. with an intro. by Mitchell A. Leaska (London: Hogarth, 1978), *TP*; *The Common Reader* (New York: Harcourt, 1955), *CR1*; *The Common Reader/Second Series* (London: Hogarth, 1932), *CR2*; *The Death of the Moth/and Other Essays* (London: Hogarth, 1942), *DM*; *Granite and Rainbow* (London: Hogarth, 1958), *GR*; *The Letters of Virginia Woolf,* ed. Nigel Nicholson and Joanne Trautmann. 6 vols. (London: Hogarth, 1975–80), *VWL*; *The Diary of Virginia Woolf,* intro. by Quentin Bell and ed. by Anne Olivier Bell. 5 vols. (London: Hogarth, 1977–84), *VWD*; *The Essays of Virginia Woolf 1904–12,* ed. Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth, 1986), *VWE*; *Virginia Woolf/Moments of Being/Unpublished Autobiographical Writings,* ed. with an intro. and notes by Jeanne Schulkind (Sussex: Univ. of Sussex Press, 1976), *MB*.

[2] J. W. Graham, "Manuscript Revision and the Heroic Theme of *The Waves*," *Twentieth Century Literature,* 29 (1983), 312–32. Subsequent references are to *TCL*.

[3] Graham is referring to *VWD,* 3:285: "The interludes are difficult, yet I think essential; so as to bridge and also give a background—the sea; insensitive nature."

[4] Graham implies that the hypersensitive response of the anonymous Consciousness to "insensitive nature" in *The Waves* is confined to the interludes. This is not the case. In the episodes, insensitive nature is figured variously as "'this illimitable chaos . . . this formless imbecility'" (*W*, pp. 246–47), "'this flood'" (p. 248), this "'leaden waste of waters'" (p. 268), "'the huge blackness of what is outside us'" (p. 303), the "'unfeeling universe'" (p. 307); and, in an incident discussed in the text above, as "'the stupidity of nature'" (p. 294 ff.). It is already present in *Night and Day* (London: Hogarth, 1930), as "the vast external world which recks so little of the happiness, of the marriages or deaths of individuals" (p. 350); it is also the subject of the entire second section ("Time Passes") of *To the Lighthouse*.

[5] Graham mistakenly dates this diary-entry as 30 Sept. 1930; it should be 30 Sept. 1926.

[6] See Daniel Allbright, *Personality and Impersonality: Lawrence, Woolf, and Mann* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 96 ff; also pp. 196–97: Virginia Woolf's "solution to a major paradox of modern fiction" is to recognize that, though "characterization is a form of reference to the human exterior . . . there is nothing in the novel which refers to anything but the equable and impalpable personality of the novelist." Compare Allbright's "impalpable personality" with Graham's "anonymous Consciousness" (above).

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[7] See also my 1974 conference paper, " 'The only way I stay afloat': Work as Woolf's *raison d'être*," *Women's Studies*, 4, No. 2–3 (1977), 238–39.

[8] "Thoby's form looms behind—that queer ghost. I think of death sometimes as the end of an excursion which I went on when he died" (*VWD*, 3:275). See also Stephen Trombley, *"All That Summer She was Mad": Virginia Woolf and Her Doctors* (London: Junction Books, 1981), p. 83: "Thoby's death . . . plunged Virginia into a state of mourning from which . . . she never completely emerged." Trombley's hypothesis is most vividly confirmed by Bernard's confession that " 'No lullaby [rather than elegy] has ever occurred to me capable of singing [Percival] to rest' " (*W*, p. 266)—remembering that Percival is modeled, in part, on Thoby to whose memory Woolf wanted to dedicate *The Waves* (*VWD*, 4:10).

[9] See *VWL*, 1:45–46, and *MB*, p. 119.

[10] "If life has a base that it stands upon . . . then [mine] without a doubt stands upon this memory. It is of lying half asleep, half awake . . . hearing the waves breaking: one, two, one, two, and sending a splash of water over the beach" (*MB*, p. 64).

[11] The most extended description of the magnanimous hero on horseback, the symbol in its definitive form, occurs in *Night and Day*, pp. 107–08. See also pp. 129, 132, 138, 157, 205, 238, 284, 338, 379, 393, 502, and 535. For the connection between the magnanimous hero and Herbert Duckworth see *MB*, pp. 89–90. Woolf calls her brother Thoby "Herbert" in an early letter (*VWL*, 1:3). In "Reading," written the year *Night and Day* was published, Woolf lists "dignity, loyalty, magnanimity" as virtues the Elizabethan Lady Fanshawe "would commend, and frame her speech to"; she conjures up "visions of Elizabethan magnanimity"; she also refers to Sir Thomas Browne's "magnanimous mind" (in *The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays* (London: Hogarth, 1950), pp. 143, 151, 162. For a full discussion of the subject, see my article, "The Magnanimous Hero on Horseback: Virginia Woolf and the Battle of Life" (forthcoming).

[12] Hence the fact that Bernard, identified with Percival as magnanimous " 'master of the art of living,' " is made to declare, " 'nor do I always know if I am a man or woman' " (*W*, p. 308).

[13] "Not One of Us," published originally in 1927 (rpt. *DM*, pp. 78–83). The fact that this essay was written during the extended incubation period of *The Waves* is significant, as are the references in that novel to several Shelley poems: see Beverly Ann Schlack, *Continuing Presences: Virginia Woolf's Use of Literary Allusion* (University Park: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1979), pp. 105–31, 153, 178. Woolf's description of Shelley, taken from W. E. Peck's *Shelley: His Life and Work*, which she was reviewing, bears a striking resemblance to Percival—both as he appears in the novel and as the reader (keeping in mind a particular type of young English manhood embodied in Thoby Stephen, George Mallory, Rupert Brooke, etc.) might imagine him. He was, Woolf writes, "a lean large-boned boy, much freckled, with big rather prominent blue eyes. His dress was careless, of course, but . . . 'he wore his clothes like a gentleman'. . . . Nobody could overlook the presence of this discordant character in the room, and his presence was strangely disturbing." A "champion riding out . . . with heroic courage," he was "at the same time blind, inconsiderate, obtuse to other person's feeling" (pp. 79, 83).

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[14] See *The Waves,* pp. 40–41, 49–52, 97–98, 264–65. See also *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* by Joseph Campbell (Cleveland: World Pub., 1956), pp. 345–49: "The Hero as Emperor and Tyrant." See also p. 353: "The hero of yesterday becomes the tyrant of tomorrow, unless he crucifies *himself* today"—which both Percival and Bernard do.

[15] Woolf's hostility to specialization, its origins and consequences (particularly for professional and academic critics of Woolf's work) is too large and complex a subject to be taken up here; but see my forthcoming article, "The 'Search for a Sufficient Height': Woolf's Rejection of Egotist, Academic and Specialist."

[16] Concluding a 1908 letter to the woman she still (in 1931) called "Dearest, dearest Dolphin," Woolf wrote: "It is now thundering out at sea. . . . Monster that you are—I adore you" (*VWL,* 1:361). The proximity of "sea" and "monster," plus the ambivalent attitude of writer to correspondent, help to confirm the two-sided interpretation of Woolf's fin-vision offered in the text above.

[17] " 'To-day we did what we have promised ourselves to do on the first opportunity.' The sea at St. Ives had a dull surface that day until the calm was broken by their sailing into a school of porpoises." Woolf, in her Cornwall diary, 14 Aug. 1905, quoted by Lyndall Gordon, *Virginia Woolf: A Writer's Life* (New York: Norton, 1984), p. 205, footnote. See also Frances Spalding, *Vanessa Bell* (New Haven: Ticknor & Fields, 1984), p. 55.

[18] This assertion may need qualification in view of the enormous number of posthumously published Woolf texts which have continued to give "voice" to a woman who died nearly fifty years ago.

[19] In noting the identification of those "fabulous presences" or "enemies" with the great stones of Stonehenge, we must remember that Percival is also " 'a great stone' " (*W,* p. 148), " 'remote from us all in a pagan universe' " (*W,* p. 38).

[20] See *WHD,* p. 765: "Then the complete dying out of identity. Then its return." See also p. 766; and p. 768: "Sometimes I think I have escaped identity: that I am free. But you recall me."

[21] Garrett Stewart, *Death Sentences: Styles of Dying in British Fiction* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1984), p. 308. Stewart's discussion of Woolf's work is admirable.

[22] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957), p. 207.

[23] Susanne Langer, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art Developed from Philosophy in a New Key* (London: Routledge, 1953), p. 335; Maynard Mack, Introduction to Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (New York: Rinehart, 1948), p. xiv.

[24] Langer, *Feeling and Form,* p. 334; Eric Bentley, *The Playwright as Thinker: A Study of Drama in Modern Times* (New York, Meridian, 1955), p. 128.

[25] Woolf's most moving personal expression of her tragic sense of life is the account she gives of "the tremendous feeling" she had at Roger Fry's funeral (*VWD,* 4:244). Graham is not alone in interpreting the fin as a "tragic icon"; see also Jane Marcus, "Enchanted Organ, Magic Bells: *Night and Day* as Comic Opera," in *Virginia Woolf: Revaluation and Continuity,* ed. Ralph Freedman (Berkeley, Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1980), p. 102.

[26] " 'Always it begins again; always there is the enemy . . . the effort of waiting. Call the waiter. Pay the bill. We must pull ourselves up out of our

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chairs. We must find our coats. We must go. Must, must, must—detestable word'" (*W*, p. 320). Detestable, yes, but the moral imperative to continue, against all odds, is surely an affirmation of the great comic spirit, of the conviction that life must and will go on—with or without me, the individual. Parsifal (Percival's namesake) rather than Tristan or Roland is the hero here invoked. "'Lines and colours almost persuade me that I too can be heroic,'" says Bernard (*W*, p. 169). The modest adverb modifier characterizes the comic rather than the tragic hero.

[27] See *VWL*, 1:404–06; see also Woolf's two essays, "The Opera" (*VWE*, pp. 269–72) and "Impressions at Bayreuth" (*VWE*, pp. 288–93), esp. pp. 289–90. Woolf's debt to Wagner is discussed, inadequately, by John L. DiGaetani, *Richard Wagner and the Modern Novel* (London: Association of Univ. Publishers, 1976). Much better is William Blissett's article: "Wagnerian Fiction in English," *Criticism*, 5, No. 3 (Summer 1963), 239–60.

[28] "Durch Mitleid wissend, / der reine Tor; / harre sein, / den ich erkor" is what Gurnemanz sings in Act I of *Parsifal*. Earlier, Amfortas sings "'Der reine Tor!' / Mich dünkt, ihn zu erkennen: / dürft'ich den Tod ihn nennen!" Amfortas' yearning to encounter "the appointed one" is strangely reminiscent of the end of *The Waves*: "the appointed one" is both the hero enlightened through compassion *and* Death, the ultimate presence or enemy who redeems us from the nothingness of ego-annihilation by stinging us into opposition and therefore into self-assertion—"'Against you, *I* will fling *myself*, *un*vanquished and *un*yielding, O Death'" (*W*, p. 325; italics added). The Reverend Edward Whittaker, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, teaches Miss Kilman the lesson Parsifal learns: "Knowledge comes through suffering, said Mr. Whittaker" (*MD*, p. 196).

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Richard Aldington in Transition: His Pieces for *The Sphere* in 1919

Caroline Zilboorg

When Richard Aldington was demobilized in mid-February 1919, he had no steady employment and seriously questioned his capacity to earn a living by his writing. He was emotionally and physically drained by his military experience and his personal life was in a shambles: his wife, the American poet H. D., was pregnant with another man's child; Bryher (Winifred Ellerman, daughter of Sir John Ellerman, millionaire owner of the White Star line and many Fleet Street publications) had fallen in love with H. D.; and in an attempt to extricate himself from the tensions of his dissolving marriage, he had broken off his affair with Dorothy Yorke. The literary work familiar to him before his conscription in the spring of 1916 was no longer available; the long prose works, both fiction and nonfiction, that characterize his late writing were untried modes about whose aesthetic value he was skeptical.

Imagism, the poetic movement he, H. D., and Ezra Pound had initiated in 1913, was essentially over; he had helped Amy Lowell edit the last imagist anthology in 1917.[1] He published two volumes of verse in 1919 (*Images of War* and *Images of Desire*), but these were collections of poetry written almost entirely during his nearly three years at the front. He now felt unequal to composing the short, finely crafted lyric poems that characterize his early creative efforts. Aldington was at a personal, artistic, and professional crossroads.

The excerpts that follow are taken from short articles Aldington published in the *Sphere* in April, May, September, and October 1919. They have not been collected and do not appear in any bibliography of Aldington's works.[2] They deserve reading as perceptive, sharply

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observed, and sometimes charming pieces that are in themselves a small but important part of Aldington's literary output, yet it is as evidence of a major transition in his work and adumbration of what will follow that they are particularly significant.

Before 1916, Aldington's writing consisted of short imagist lyrics and brief satiric poems as well as literary articles primarily for the *New Freewoman* and its successor, the *Egoist,* for both of which he was literary editor. At the forefront of imagism and intimately in touch with the bohemian world of early modernism through personal friends (among them H. D., Pound, D. H. Lawrence, T. S. Eliot, Frank Flint, Wyndham Lewis, and John Gould Fletcher), he was regularly seeing into print important work of other modernist authors: new American writers, such as Marianne Moore and William Carlos Williams, appeared in the *Egoist* through the joint efforts of Pound and Aldington, and James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* first appeared serially in the *Egoist,* starting on February 2, 1914. Aldington's own verse appeared in the important avant-garde journals of the day (in Harold Monro's *Poetry Review* and Harriet Monroe's *Poetry*), and his prose defined and praised early modernism and hailed its individual artists. He reviewed new books from the perspective of an occasionally brash and forward-looking youth well-steeped in classical and European literature, evaluating such writers as John Galsworthy and James Stephens (*New Freewoman,* May 9, 1912)—at a time when Aldington himself was not yet quite twenty), Violet Hunt (*Egoist,* January 1, 1914), Robert Frost (*Egoist,* July 1, 1914), and John Millington Synge (*Egoist,* January 1, 1915).

Aldington's international literary interests also colored his own poetry and prose. Roman and especially Greek subjects and allusions were characteristic elements in his verse at this time, and his tastes in literature ran frequently to the continental: he regularly praised and translated the work of Remy de Gourmont[3] and often reviewed European authors such as Arthur Schnitzler (*Egoist,* January 1, 1914), Henri de Regnier (*Egoist,* January 15, 1914), and Charles Péguy (*Egoist,* October 15, 1914). Aldington's particular interest in French literature was clear in his early work and continued to influence his tastes and values for the rest of his life.

If Aldington's early creative work (1911 through 1919) was primarily lyric poetry, the second distinct phase clearly began in 1928, when he turned to prose fiction. He rejected the novel as an inferior art form, asserting in 1914 that "It is a bore to read a novel, because novelists today drag in a whole lot of extraneous matter which somehow deadens the emotion received as a thick cotton pad deadens a blow."[4] In

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the same vein, he cautioned H. D. in a late letter from the front not to devote her energies to prose at the cost of poetry. She had evidently written to him that she was considering writing a novel, and he responded: "Prose? No! You have so precise, so wonderful an instrument—why abandon it to fashion another perhaps less perfect? You have, I think, to choose pure song or drama or else Mallarméan subtlety."[5]

By 1928, however, the year in which he left England for essentially permanent residence abroad, the year in which he left Dorothy Yorke, with whom he resumed his relationship in late 1919, and the year in which he began his eight-year affair with Brigit Patmore, he had also changed his feelings about prose fiction, and with the publication of his popular *Death of a Hero* in 1929, Aldington began a period of fiction writing, producing six additional novels in the next ten years: *The Colonel's Daughter* (1931), *All Men Are Enemies* (1933), *All Women Must Work* (1934), *Very Heaven* (1937), *Seven against Reeves* (1938), and *The Rejected Guest* (1939). Two collections of short stories (*Roads to Glory* in 1930 and *Soft Answers* in 1932) also appeared during this period.

Fiction required for Aldington an intimate examination of personal and national experience, and the years between his demobilization and the publication of *Death of a Hero* were a period of retreat during which his creative energies were active if restrained. The novels and stories which emerged forcefully in the decade between 1929 and 1939 had their roots in World War I as subject and cause of the action and of the characters' psychology and situation. His fiction also depended on detailed satire of English life both before the war and in the Twenties, the life that surrounded him in his formative years and greeted him on his return from the front, the life he, however bohemian, was living until his departure from England in the late Twenties. By the end of the Thirties, Aldington felt he could no longer produce a novel, and wrote to Henry Slonimsky about financial difficulties that resulted from his second wife's divorce from her first husband, Michael Patmore, Brigit Patmore's son: "If I could write a novel, up to standard, I could make several thousand dollars, but I simply can't. I have nothing to say now."[6]

While his fictional work was still brewing, Aldington continued to write poetry in the Twenties and into the Thirties, but he essentially abandoned the lyric that fulfilled imagist principles for longer, prosier, more narrative poems. In a letter to Sir Herbert Read, the English poet, publisher, and art critic, Aldington wrote in 1924:

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> I abandon, I cast off, utterly deny the virtue of "extreme compression and essential significance of every word." I say that it is the narrow path that leadeth to sterility. It makes a desert and you call it art. . . . I think this and the next decades of our lives should be a period of intense production and widening audience.[7]

The loose, dramatic poems of the Twenties and Thirties illustrate Aldington's new literary principles. For example, *The Fool i' the Forest* (1925) is a narrative war poem that anticipates *Death of a Hero* in subject and tone. *A Dream in the Luxembourg* (1930) is an erotic narrative hymn dedicated to Brigit Patmore. *The Crystal World* (1937) recounts his initial depression in the United States when his future second wife rejects their love as impossible and his exultation when she telegraphs him to come to England and marry her. These and the other long poems of this period are more explicitly autobiographical than Aldington's novels, although they, too, draw on personal experience. It should not surprise us, then, that this period of imaginative narrative work ends with Aldington's memoir, *Life for Life's Sake* (1941), which began to appear serially in the *Atlantic* on August 20, 1940.

But in 1919, Aldington could not anticipate the critical attitudes he expressed so clearly to Read five years later. Without the epistolary outlet of the war years and his nearly daily letters to H. D., he was unsure of what use he might make of his personal experience: the process of transforming it into a novel was ten years off; the autobiography that would cover the same material was twenty years away. Even the long modernist poem, which in the light of Aldington's entire literary career seems for him a personal and transitional form, was a genre several years off and as yet without models: T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* did not appear until 1922, and although Pound had published "Three Cantos" in 1917,[8] no one—least of all probably Pound himself—knew where they might lead. H. D. would not turn to the long poem until the Forties, and her most successful sustained poem, *Helen in Egypt,* did not appear until the end of her life in 1961. What Aldington needed and wanted in 1919 was the "intense production and wider audience" that would bring him the financial means to live and a degree of artistic fulfillment.

The *Sphere* seemed in some ways a logical journal in which to place his initial literary utterances after the war. First, it was an available outlet: its editor, Clement Shorter, had through Bryher come to know H. D. and through her had been introduced to Aldington in February 1919. Sir John Ellerman owned a controlling interest in the *Sphere* and

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was willing to do something on Aldington's behalf, evidently at Bryher's request. Second, the *Egoist* was no longer willing to take him on in a responsible position. Aldington had hoped that its editor, Harriet Shaw Weaver, would offer him a sufficiently lucrative appointment on the basis of which he might have been demobilized before February 1919, but a letter to H. D. revealed his anger at Miss Weaver's response:

> All I can say is, My God. I am surrounded by fools and super-fools. Does she, do you, does *any* sane person imagine that the Govt. will release an officer to take up an appointment of *£36 a year?* . . . What a blasted fool the woman is. Tell her and her bloody paper to go to hell.[9]

Through Sir John Ellerman, he was able to secure probably in early March a job as French reviewer for the *Times Literary Supplement,* but Aldington did not assume his duties until at least April, for he did not record being paid by the *Times* until early May, 1919.[10]

The *Times* position alone, however, was insufficient; he earned from reviews £9.3.6 in May, £14.3.6 in June, and £31.3.6 in July—the highest monthly amount they were to pay him that year. He needed to supplement his income with steady journalistic work, for his royalties were paltry (he earned £1.5.7 from imagist anthology royalties in March 1919; £1.2.9 in October; a meager £0.11.7 in November). Although he was to earn £336.8.0 for the year, his income was sufficiently precarious so that in August he was to list £10.0.0, presumably a gift, from "H. D.," the only source in the entire thirty-five-year record that is not a periodical, publisher, or book title. Aldington wrote for numerous journals in early 1919: for example, he earned £2.2.0 from the *Pall Mall Gazette* in March; £3.3.0 from the *Nation* in April; £1.1.0 from *Today* in May. The *Sphere* was additionally an attractive periodical because it paid well: Aldington received from his articles in the *Sphere* £4.4.0 in March 1919, and £37.16.0 in April. He did not then earn anything from them until August, when he listed a payment of £16.16.0, and in October he received £12.12.0. He never wrote for the *Sphere* again.

His relationship with the periodical was brief, relatively lucrative, and primarily with its editor, Clement Shorter, whose North American vacation in the summer and fall (early June through mid-September) of 1919 explains the hiatus in Aldington's articles. The nature of the *Sphere* itself explains in part why he appeared there so briefly, as does Aldington's comparative financial security in the Twenties. At the end of 1919 he must have realized that by his unstintingly energetic journalistic efforts he could earn at least a predictable £300 a year by publishing in more sophisticated and literary journals (such as *Poetry,*

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the *Fortnightly Review,* the *Dial,* and the *Anglo-French Review,* as well as the *Times Literary Supplement,* which accepted other work of his in addition to his reviews of French literature). Publishing wherever possible in 1919 (including the *Sphere,* the *Pall Mall Gazette,* and *Everyman*), he earned £336.8.0 by February 1920; publishing more selectively in 1920, he earned £344.8.11 by the end of the year.

The *Sphere*'s subtitle, *An Illustrated Journal for the Home,* suggests its wide appeal and essentially unliterary nature. During the war, it focused almost exclusively on the experience of war and included war news and accounts of particular battles, regiments, and individual soldiers in brief articles dominated by large, well-reproduced and captioned photographs, compelling charcoal drawings, and even paintings of combat and life behind the lines. "Women's Sphere" by "Olivia" was a regular feature and devoted its columns to accounts of women's war work at home and in the field and to fashion suggestions and household hints. Each weekly issue typically included a large number of advertisements, often with full- or half-page pictures, urging one to buy cigarettes, fine men's suits, children's wear, women's hats, baby furniture, infants' food, and various elixirs for constipation and depression. The appeal was for the romantic and elegant as well as the useful and healthy.

Amid this variety, the *Sphere*'s editor, Clement Shorter, included an occasional short book review section ("Literature: Some Recent Books of the Day") and wrote a weekly column, "A Literary Letter," signed with his initials (C. K. S.) and devoted to his interests. Occasionally forward-looking, his column was subtitled "The Poems of Carl Sandburg—Imagist" on August 3, 1918, and profiled John Gould Fletcher on October 5, 1918, but his more typical subjects were Emily Brontë (in the same article with Sandburg on August 3, 1918), Tennyson (August 17, 1918), Elizabeth Barrett Browning (November 2, 1918), Swinburne (December 14, 1918), and Meredith (March 1, 1919). The paper was basically conservative: on August 16, 1919, it included a picture article, "The Passing of Andrew Carnegie," and frequently featured "The Roll of Honour," which listed with photographs officers who died at the front. The paper's diction was patriotic and its tone sentimental. Shorter wrote characteristically in "A Literary Letter" on June 8, 1918, "Life is so full of tragedy just now, and for every home in which there is sorrow there should be sympathy from the stranger" (p. 184). Similarly, in evaluating Sandburg's verse on August 3, 1918, Shorter wrote, "I love a man who is not ashamed to wear his heart upon his sleeve and call his wife his 'pal'" (p. 90).

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After November 11, 1918, the *Sphere* retained its focus on the war. In "A Literary Letter" on December 28, 1918, Shorter wrote about his recent tour of battle-ravaged France; the January 4, 1919, issue was logically a war retrospective. But Shorter sought out new writers, who quickly affected the paper's character. On December 28, 1918, A. A. Milne, who soon became a regular contributor, wrote a brief travelogue. Pictures rapidly began to appear in color, and short or serial fiction became a standard feature of each issue by early 1919. Shorter's paper remained an odd combination of news and literary material, stressing matter of popular appeal but including highbrow items as startling to the modern reader as they must have been to the contemporary public. These avant-garde pieces were often the result of personal acquaintance as well as of Shorter's own capricious interests and sometimes undiscriminating tastes. Thus, on November 16, 1918, he praised in a comparatively lengthy review "The Lament for Adonis," translated from the Greek by Winifred Bryher, and began to publish Aldington's reflective and bookish articles on April 12, 1919.

The first two sketches were personal and anecdotal, and in tone both tender and bitter, and, in the character of the woman who runs the bookshop at Grenay, anticipated the strengths of Aldington's later fiction. He had a penchant for compressed irony which one finds in his detached attitude: "The average French ruined house in north France was very badly furnished with books" ("Books in the Line"). He was impeccably honest, fully capable of self-satire in his amusing self-portrait upon his meeting Madame in "The Book-Shop at Grenay." Although he wrote humorously of the soldier's life amid military chaos, he was also the romantic intellectual cherishing literary moments at the front. This side of him also revealed his deep feelings, verging on the sentimental in "Crosses," for example.

In "War Poetry," Aldington returned to territory familiar to him, and this article recalled his earlier *Egoist* work as well as the reviews of French literature for the *Times* in its use of the first person in an essentially impersonal way. Here the voice of the logical, extremely well-educated observer returned to generalize about literature and to draw specific examples to the modern reader's attention. Aldington encapsulated some of his own literary difficulties here when he wrote that "Literature is not concerned with 'actualities.' Journalism is." At a time when his life was overwhelmingly concerned with actualities, the attempt to write literature, as opposed to journalism, was painfully frustrating and nearly impossible for him. The fiction to come ten years later seemed a natural resolution of these divergent genres. "Prefer-

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ences in French Literature" was clearly a lowbrow companion piece to his current work for the *Times*. In his final restraint, in which he found none of the authors he praised "altogether unworthy of attention," he almost sounded French, or at least like a reviewer for the *Times* rather than the Chaplinesque bumpkin on the streets of Grenay.

In his memories of the Château de Fressin, Aldington attempted yet another mode, the travelogue, but he quickly slipped into historical and finally into personal reflection: he concluded his description of the castle by calling it "voluptuous," stating mysteriously, "I will not say that it made me in love with death, but it reconciled me in a quarrel with life." As if realizing that by such a mystical response he loses his reader, he ironically ended his sketch by insisting that "to express its true value would need . . . a long novel." It was not until *Death of a Hero* in 1929 that Aldington was able to express through art what the war in conflict with humanity and beauty meant to him, but he was drawing on experience he had already attempted to communicate in a letter. More than a year earlier he had written to H. D. about his visit to a similar (if not the same) ruined castle, evoking its fairy-tale associations, and described the "deep sensation of mystery and seclusion . . . I got from this place."[11] The irresolution of "The Château de Fressin" clearly has its source in Aldington's own life and in his attempts to understand personal difficulties through psychology and art.

"The Poetry Bookshop" is literary journalism of the sort with which Aldington was experienced and comfortable. A piece like this one seemed especially out of place in the *Sphere,* for Aldington stopped just short of insulting the very English public who comprise the *Sphere*'s readers. We should not be surprised that this was nearly his last article for Shorter's paper. "The Present Discontent" revealed Aldington in a characteristically philosophic vein: logical, skeptical, irreverent, wide-ranging, and principled—even if those principles separated him from the *Sphere*'s readers instead of evoking their sympathies. This apparent disregard for audience reaction and insistence on reducing experience and issues to principles that only hypocrites would wish him to compromise are typical of Aldington and increasingly characteristic of him as a writer later in his career. That these principles are admirable and finally elicit at least this reader's sympathies may make them ultimately worth forcing on the audience.

Aldington's final article for the *Sphere,* "The Purbeck Hills," was prompted by the "two or three weeks off" from his work in London which he spent near the town of Corfe Castle in Dorset close to the place where he had first been in military training.[12] This trip in the late

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summer of 1919 must have recalled for him much personal experience earlier in his marriage as well as the contrast between his present rather solitary, war-shattered life and his days in Cornwall before conscription in May 1916. The article was again in the mode of reflective travelogue, and conveyed at once Aldington's sensitivity to nature and the removed perspective he cherished of the poet beyond the vulgarity of commerce, in touch with the mystery of nature, and observing the world with a classical combination of irony and pity.

Aldington's conclusion to his penultimate article—in which he argued for cynicism in the light of humanity's many failures—perhaps explains in part why after October 1919 he never published again in the *Sphere*. More importantly, however, it suggests the themes of all of his later work: Aldington never really became a cynic, but neither did he ever cease proclaiming his own discontent with a disordered world, an unequal distribution of material necessities, a prevailing ignorance, and an insufficiency of human love.

Excerpts from Aldington's Nine Articles for *The Sphere*

"Books in the Line," April 12, 1919, p. 26.

Somehow or other we managed to go on reading. Through the labour and fatigue, the mud and frost, the heat and shells and lice, the general microcosm of inferno, some of us did not quite forget the meaning of books, even found time to read a few.

The title of this article is, perhaps, rather a boast, for I at least never actually read a book in the front line, though I have carried books there to read when the company went back in support. Kirchner post cards and English illustrated periodicals seemed to fit the case up there. . . .

All the first half of 1917 I was in a pioneer battalion on the Lens-La Bassée front. We were billeted most of the time in an evacuated village about 2,000 yards from Loos. At night we had to go up the line and dig mud out of trenches, or fill up shell holes in the streets of Loos, or put up wire or dig emplacements—cheery sort of work at any time, but especially so in the darkness and bitter cold rain, with whizz-bangs flying around and that fool Boche machine gunner on the Double Crassier zipping off a belt in your direction every few minutes. We used to get back to our cellars somewhere about three a.m., and the great advantage of this particular branch of the service was that one's afternoons were generally free. In those odd hours I wrote a book of poems [*Images of War*], read quite a number of books, and sometimes went book-hunting in Bully-Grenay. I find I read a queer assortment of classics and mush.

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Renan's *Vie de Jésus* is a book I shall never forget. I was reading it alone in a cellar when the Germans began bombarding the village during the battle of Arras. . . .

Those extraordinary days—or rather nights—remain in my mind along with parts of Dante, the end of *Oedipus Tyrannus*, *Lear*, and parts of Edgar Poe, as things which could only have happened in the harsh imagination of man, never in reality. . . .

It was queer that in this sort of thing persisted the love of books, the necessity for culture even. . . .

Later in the war I found this necessity for books had increased rather than diminished. I read Gyp in the dug-out under the Brewery at Loos, Dante at Tunbridge Wells, began a translation of the *Anacreontea* at Newhaven, and finished it in a village near Tournai. I read Mr. James Joyce on Hill 70, Henri Barbusse and Anatole France at Fressin, Remy de Gourmont at Morchies, near Quéant. I bought Landor's *Classical Dialogues* (five francs for the shilling edition!) at Doullens, and read them at various places between Cambrai and Maubeuge. . . .

"The Book-Shop at Grenay," April 19, 1919, p. 54.

. . . I cannot quite remember how I came to find it, for it had no *devanture*—no display of goods—so I must have found it accidently. . . as I walked along the street by the railway crossing there was the familiar whizz-zz—crash! of a five-nine, followed by others in closer and nastier proximity. I was the only person silly enough to be in the street, and—to put it baldly—I took my hat in one hand and my gas-bag in the other, and ran. . . . I dashed in a doorway, and . . . cannoned into a fat old lady who looked rather alarmed and not a little cross at me. "Madame," said I, looking vaguely around, "Madame, je viens . . ." and I saw—of all things!—a tall pile of French novels, "Madame, je veux des livres français!" And she replied calmly, "À votre service, monsieur."

. . . As all troops do, we vanished suddenly from the neighborhood, and it was over a year before I went back there—this time as an officer. One afternoon in May, after a most wearisome eighteen days' tour in the line under an imbecile C.O., I sought refuge with "the old lady of the bookshop," as I mentally called her, for with that casual spirit of coming and going at a moment's notice we had never asked each other's names.

. . . Someday I will go back to Grenay and I will go to the bookshop of Madame and I will say "Vous avez toujours des livres, madame? En donnez-moi pour cent francs!"

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"Crosses," April 26, 1919, p. 70.

It would be good to be able to write something on this subject which would be neither cold nor mawkish but just a straight expression of feeling. . . .

. . . If I wanted to paint one of my dominant impressions of France it would be acres and acres of little wooden crosses—like those vast graveyards outside Étaples. One lived so very near death. . . .

The expenditure of life in the late war marks it out among all wars. . . . Crosses, crosses, crosses; they were everywhere; most of us, I think, came to take them for granted and scarcely saw them, but to me they were history in a tragic, homely sense, representing the sacrifice of common men for causes they but dimly apprehended. And this daily contact with the continually-growing holocaust bred in one a mood of irritated pity, pity for the vast, irretrievable sacrifice, the irritation with doctrinaires—whether Chauvinist or Pacifist—who thought their little views and arguments and worldly quarrels mattered besides those monuments of human misery.

. . . My memories are of the little graveyards in Maroc, of the Canadian memorial cross near the Lens-Béthune road, of the crosses over three C.M.R.'s on the further slope of Hill 70. I remember, too, those curiously sad inscriptions put up over unknown enemies; the business-like English, "Here lies an unknown German," the French, with its chivalrous postscript, "Cî-git 1 soldat allemand. P.P.L. [Priez pour lui]," and the curt German, "Ein Englander"—all reported missing to relatives who are perhaps still hopeful that they are alive.

. . . And, most of all, what is there to say of the graves of children killed by bombs and shells in villages near the line? There is nothing to say. And nothing to say also of that strange cross which stands with so sinister an air in a village churchyard on the Franco-Belgian frontier, a cross which leaves one painfully wondering what pitiful body it marks, for it is simply inscribed, "Une victime de seize ans."

"War Poetry," May 10, 1919, p. 114

There was a good deal of talk, especially in the earlier days of the war, of the effect which that calamity would have upon literature, as upon our lives. This was a barren sort of discussion, chiefly remarkable for the insincerity of the views expounded; for, if the writers so firmly believed in the ennobling effect of war upon literature, it was at least strange that they did not press forward to test the truth of their contention. Probably mature consideration brought them to a different conclusion, though they may have hesitated to make public their change of opinion.

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Traditionally there are only two themes open to a poet—war and love. This idea must have been started by a prose writer to preserve all the other themes for himself. War, though popular enough, has not the "popular interest" of love, which will probably remain a subject of discussion while the human race lasts. War may be abolished (on the other hand, it may not), but in any case there is no particular reason why a calamity should stimulate literature. It would be just as reasonable to argue that war tends to suppress literature. Suppose the whole of Lancashire were obliterated by an earthquake; is there any real likelihood that it would result in a literary Renaissance in London? Why, then, should the calamities of Europe have such an effect?

Literature is not concerned with "actualities." Journalism is. Therefore we may justly claim that the war has profoundly influenced journalism, but will not necessarily influence literature—except, perhaps, indirectly. Admirable journalism has been produced by the war, from Lord French's despatches to the works of Ian Hay and Beach Thomas. But where is literature? Where is the work that will be read a hundred years hence as we now read Stendhal's *Chartreuse de Parme*?

Quite literally scores of books of "poems" have been published with "the war" as theme—some readable, some unreadable, but all more or less ephemeral in tone and thought.

The sonnets of Rupert Brooke are hallmarked "1914," but since they do clearly represent a genuine feeling, it is probable that they will remain. There was a hint of reality in Mr. Nichols's *Ardours and Endurances*. The poems of Mr. Sassoon had a quality of sincerity, the sincerity of revolt. They err on the side of bitterness, but they are not humbug nor facile acquiescence. Their technique was dubious, but their sincerity appealed to soldiers who disagreed with the attitude implied.

. . . But of the many books containing "war poems" which have come my way, I feel most sympathy for Mr. Frederic Manning's *Eidola* and Mr. Herbert Read's *Naked Warriors*. The two books are very different in tone and achievement; Mr. Manning probably took himself far less seriously than Mr. Read, who set out deliberately to smash the romantic conception of war.

Eidola is in this respect a less didactic production; it is more balanced. Nearly everything in *Naked Warriors* is abrupt, terrible; savage. The more serene intelligence of the author of *Scenes and Portraits* allowed him to grasp beauty where Read can only find disgust and horror.

It is two years since I read *Eidola*, yet I still remember the beauty of the poem on Mametz Wood and the other poems of the transport. . . . And this was not mere literary "playing with

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reality"; it was the power of the balanced mind to recognise eternal loveliness even among horrors—the Platonic "duty!"

. . . Mr. Read writes in a more deliberately indignant way. . . . The psychology of the infantryman has nowhere been put down with such stark earnestness.

Yet even *Naked Warriors,* which set out to be a song of hatred of war, has some beauty, for Mr. Read was too honest not to put it down if only for the sake of antithesis.

. . . There are two ways of recording war. One is the romantic, the general, the bird's-eye view, like Hugo's description of Waterloo. The other is personal, the realistic method, like Stendhal's treatment of the same battle. The former is easier, and makes the greater appeal: it is full of rush and clamour, glitter and *bravura.*

The latter is subdued, cynical, intimate, disparaging of flashing swords and clinking spurs. Preference for either is a matter of taste. Both are probably worth doing, but on the whole Stendhal's method is the more enduring. . . .

"Preferences in French Literature," May 17, 1919, p. 140.

The study of French literature in England is often enthusiastic, but generally uncritical. . . . There is undoubtedly in France a living literature of force and originality, a literature peculiarly French and founded, like so much interesting literature, on the principle of personal freedom and individuality.

The comparative neglect of this literature—of course it's well known in literary "sets"—is due partly to the instinctive hatred of art which is at the root of English society (perhaps of all societies).

. . . French literature is written for adults—for educated adults; it is not meant to supersede school primers or to entertain the leisure of maid-servants and flappers. It represents a vital culture. But just as there are bad Greek authors and bad Elizabethan authors, so there are many bad French authors. They tend to swamp the good men, and it is not at all wonderful that a busy, slightly bewildered public damns the whole lot with the mighty word "decadent"—a word invented by French "poncives" to suppress the younger generation of the time.

"Schools"—in literature there are individuals, not schools. . . . How, for example, can we confine within that stupid word, "Symbolist," men so utterly unlike as Henri de Régnier, lover of the classics and the eighteenth century, Remy de Gourmont, sceptic, erudite, scientific, and Francis Jammes, a pious and benign Catholic?

French literature did not cease with Victor Hugo, nor with

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Gautier, nor Baudelaire; Leconte de Lisle, whose prose versions of Greek poetry are beautiful and an inspiration, was not the last poet-scholar of France. Nor is Anatole France the only living prose writer.

Recently I had occasion to make a list of interesting modern French authors for a friend who did not want to bother with making prolonged investigations. It was not easy, because one scarcely knew where to begin or where to end. But an idea of the wealth and variety of contemporary French writing can be obtained by reading some fifty volumes.

. . . The list becomes illimitable; yet from personal acquaintance with at least some of the work of each of the authors named, I believe that none of them is altogether unworthy of attention.

"The Château de Fressin," September 3, 1919, p. 260.

There are certain landscapes which by virtue of the law of the association of ideas acquire a quality of attraction or unpleasantness for us, irrespective of their intrinsic charm or ugliness. This illusive quality, understood by some landscape painters, is singularly absent from modern art, whether from insensitiveness on the part of painters or from a need to re-act against the maudlin neurosis of "Romance." Undeniably this quality exists and can be recorded in the arts, though as painting tends more and more to neglect *nuances* and to concentrate on "essential form," literature alone will take an interest in it. . . . The association of the Château de Fressin is always more pleasant to me than its aesthetic qualities warrant, because of the ideas of freedom, sunlight, repose, and peace which it suggests.

. . . The barrenness, physical and spiritual, of the old front line needs no further description, but it must be mentally visualised to appreciate the value of that moment. There was something amazing in coming to a place where the fields were not wrecked, where the houses were intact, and where trees were not mere splintered stumps, but tall, firm stems bursting into a green cloud of leaves. To reach the castle one had to force a path through twined shrubs, and then scramble painfully up the moat into the ruined centre hall. . . . That small trees should grow in the place where generals had dined seemed a delicate revenge; and to be shut off by that deep moat and tangled wood (like the castle in the fairy tale) from all other human beings, after so many weeks without solitude, was inexpressibly voluptuous. I mean voluptuous; it was like Baudelaire's dream of order and luxury—the order of natural life untroubled by the poisonous activities of stupid men, the luxury of silence. I will not say that it

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made me in love with death, but it reconciled me in a quarrel with life. . . .

"The Poetry Bookshop," September 20, 1919, p. iv.

. . . I will not go so far as to say that Mr. Monro's "Poetry Bookshop" was the first or the only window opened to let a little fresh air and vitality into . . . stuffiness; but he has done as much as anybody to help to make known the various attempts which have been undertaken to get rid of artificiality, and to write poetry which is neither contemptibly base nor contemptibly supercilious. And it would be mere hypocrisy on my part to praise without considerable reservations the works he has published and to say that I agree completely with his ideal of poetry. I disagree quite violently with some of the Poetry Bookshop productions, because I think their spirit is purely negative; their virtue lies not in what they do, but in what they avoid doing. Not to be rhetorical, not to be pretentious, not to assume a pose, not to flatter accepted standards, these are all excellent; but in themselves they are not enough; I want something more positive. There is still a trace of the British public school miasma about some of these books; there is still a panic-stricken fear of being ridiculous, which intercepts the natural flow of emotion, which produces an air of constrained solemnity.

With these reservations (which are personal, and set down merely for the sake of honesty) I can quite sincerely give my admiration to the work of the Bookshop. . . .

"The Present Discontent," September 27, 1919, p. 306.

. . . People are now discontented, but that is not the worst or the only condition; they are cynical and they are contemptuous, they are possessed with an itch for violence, which is merely another symptom of mental confusion and a confession of intellectual impotence. Discontent is not peculiar to this age; it exists always, more or less acutely. The great masses of mankind, who have seldom any particular material advantages on which to felicitate themselves, are usually discontented; they are reconciled with their fate either forcibly by a powerful government or more amiably by a religion. Clearly the present discontent is notable because there is no government firm enough to quell it and no religion sufficiently believed in to restrain it.

. . . Clearly the decay of religious feeling is a profound reason for discontent; from it comes the *malaise,* the bitterness, the restlessness of modern life. And I do not mean only established religion, but all philosophies or schemes of life which

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have something beyond a merely material outlook. Science is a slave to commerce, the arts are devastated by money-making; disinterestedness, either intellectual or spiritual, has almost ceased to exist. All minds are concentrated on the material, all intelligences are hypnotised by money. But at the moment when everyone wishes to be rich, and to be rich quickly, the world is threatened by another formidable problem, that of over-population. . . . The late war was a very cruel, a very expensive, and a very clumsy method of ridding Europe of some millions of its healthiest males. Admirable forethought of nations! A war waged with equal ruthlessness on the diseased and the incapable would have been of some benefit. The extent to which the blind encouragement of senseless multiplication has committed the world may be judged by the fact that England is overcrowded everywhere, in spite of its million dead, in spite of its still considerable expeditionary forces. . . . I personally prefer a limited, well-fed, educated, healthy world to gigantic masses of half-educated, often sickly peoples squabbling for subsistence with the ferocity of beasts.

These two facts of spiritual indifference and over-population have produced a dangerous spirit of irritation, of which the war was merely a symptom, as a boil is a symptom of diseased blood.

. . . Industrial unrest, strikes, the wild and sometimes silly schemes of "reformers," the disorder of life, of the arts, and of literature, are due to one or both of these facts. I firmly believe in "the greatest happiness for the greatest number," but that is not attained by disorder, ignorance, and avoiding facts; and I fall in love with Machiavelli's cynicism when I reflect that after so many centuries men have failed to organise themselves reasonably, to provide for the necessities of all, to instruct themselves in elementary truths, and to act with kindliness and understanding towards each other.

"The Purbeck Hills," October 11, 1919, p. ii.

When human beings become intolerable, when the crude selfishness and contest of war-brutalised society become too disgusting to stomach, there is a frail consolation—if the imperious desire for solitude can be satisfied—in the spirit of a landscape, a thing which penetrates, like an immeasurably subtle essence, the whole mind; and substitutes for a kind of disheartened indifference the certainty of something sanctified, unhuman, august.

. . . The loneliness of these hills, with names like Brenscombe, Stonehill, Povington, Bindon, Nine Barrow, is still

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> almost perfect; it is possible to wander in them all day and to meet nobody. On their great backs life becomes simple and vivid. . . . All the history of the island is there in one small tract of country, easily read with a little imagination—from the Bronze Age to the papier-mâché age. And beyond the Bronze Age is the history of the land itself with its essential kindness for us, in spite of our unworthiness; memories of days before the earth became old and verminous. Yet, since after all it is the human history that matters, we drop down from the hills to find a lodging for the night, with a fancy that perhaps many generations back some tranquil Roman philosopher, a disciple of the great Epicurus, chose, in the golden century of peace, those hills as a site for a home from which he could watch the passing of the seasons and "meditate on the mysterious scheme of the universe with irony and with pity."

[1] A final imagist anthology, edited by Aldington, appeared in 1929. It included recent work by those poets who were once a part of the imagist movement and was designed to show what sorts of different poetry they were writing in the Twenties.

[2] In *Richard Aldington: An Intimate Portrait* (ed. Alister Kershaw and Frédéric-Jacques Temple [Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1965]), Paul Schlueter has compiled a useful "Chronological Check List of Books by Richard Aldington" (pp. 175–86). Norman T. Gates has published Aldington's uncollected poems in his *The Poetry of Richard Aldington: A Critical Evaluation and an Anthology of Uncollected Poems* (University Park: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1974). There is, however, no bibliography of Aldington's uncollected prose, of which he published a great deal in many different periodicals, particularly in the Twenties and early Thirties.

[3] For instance, very early in his career he reviewed de Gourmont's *A Night in the Luxembourg* (*New Freewoman*, June 20, 1912); translations of de Gourmont's work, either by Aldington or by Pound but unattributed to either, appear in the *Egoist* on, for example, Jan. 1, 1914; July 15, 1914; and Aug. 15, 1914.

[4] From Richard Aldington's review of *Blast* (*Egoist*, July 15, 1914, p. 273).

[5] Richard Aldington to H. D., July 4, 1918. All letters from Aldington to H. D. are quoted by kind permission of Alister Kershaw and Catherine Aldington and the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Yale University. Alister Kershaw and Catherine Aldington have also granted permission for the extensive quotation of Aldington's articles from the *Sphere*.

[6] Richard Aldington to Henry Slonimsky, Dec. 12, 1939, quoted by kind permission of Alister Kershaw and Catherine Aldington and Special Collections of the Morris Library at Southern Illinois University. An American philosopher with a Polish background, Slonimsky was a friend from before the war and a long-time correspondent. In 1939 he was a professor at the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York City.

[7] Undated letter from Richard Aldington to Sir Herbert Read quoted by Read in Kershaw and Temple, eds., *Richard Aldington: An Intimate Portrait*, p. 125.

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[8] The first of Ezra Pound's "Three Cantos" appeared in *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse,* 10, No. 3, June 1917, 113–21; the second and third cantos appeared in subsequent issues.

[9] Richard Aldington to H. D., Jan. 6, 1919.

[10] In a notebook with the printed title "Army Book 136," Aldington began in February 1919 to keep a meticulous record of his monthly literary earnings continuing through 1944. This notebook is the source for the financial information included here. The notebook is in the Aldington papers in Special Collections of the Morris Library of Southern Illinois University.

[11] Richard Aldington to H. D., June 13, 1918.

[12] Aldington gives a brief account of this visit to Dorset in *Life for Life's Sake: A Book of Reminiscences* (New York: Viking, 1941), p. 271.

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The Odd Couple: The Correspondence between Marianne Moore and Ezra Pound, 1918–1939

Lois Bar-yaacov

To call Marianne Moore and Ezra Pound the odd couple is to understate the bizarre, often comic, contrasts in sensibility and style displayed in the hundreds of letters they wrote one another over a period of forty-nine years. On the other hand, the term does capture the other pole of their paradoxical relationship; this unlikely pair, at first correspondents, then friends, were joined by an enduring link of mutual admiration and laser-sharp aesthetic integrity that bridged what to the ordinary eye were unfathomable gaps in outlook and values. Pound, ebullient, rambunctious, irreverent, and profane, would seem to be the epitome of the "excess which is the common substitute for energy"[1] that Moore so deplored in other contexts. And if she says in her reluctant criticism of *The Cantos,* "Unprudery is overemphasized and secularity persists," or "Stock oaths and the result is ennui,"[2] what shall we say of the letters? Moore, with her talk of "unprudery" and secularity might well have served as the target of Pound's fury over "prunes and prismites"[3] whereas she escaped with a series of joshing admonitions distinctly affectionate in tone. Theirs was a relationship that abundantly illustrates the uncanny ability of great artists to discern in one another, through all the static of the mundane, "the helpless sincerity which precipitates a poem,"[4] the "precision [which] is a thing of the imagination."[5]

The secret of the link between them was dual: the coincidence of their respective poetics and the subtle way in which the psychic needs of each were served by the relationship that evolved through the medium

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of their correspondence. Timothy Materer has analyzed the antithetical self-effacement and self-assertion appearing in Pound's letters. Materer agrees with Yeats and Olson that Pound's was a tragically fractured ego oscillating between the naturally detached artist, and the violent man compelled to sterile assertion of the will.[6]

Each of Pound's correspondents adjusted to the dual aspects of his personality according to his or her own psychic constitution. William Carlos Williams, for example, whose personality combined to an unusual degree an overtly suffering, passive streak, often associated with femininity, and a strongly assertive, almost exaggerated masculinity, veered uncertainly over the years between a deferential admiration for Pound's artistic achievement and an irritated, if affectionate, exasperation with his posing and ideological extremism. Williams was a friend, who from the beginning of their correspondence saw himself as Pound's personal equal (if artistic disciple), and so was often riled by Pound's easy assumption of superiority. In 1944, in a letter to Robert McAlmon, trying to work out for himself his "moral" position in relation to Pound, Williams set out a rudimentary psychological analysis of his old friend:

> I know Ezra's objection to anything I'd say on these grounds is that he, being a surpassing individual, not only has a better right to survive than another but that it is immoral to think otherwise. . . .
>
> It brings up the subject of what gives a man authority in whatever he does. . . .
>
> Some Negroes have that authority in the way they wear their clothes. I know a colored porter on the Erie like that. He's a better man than another just by the way he walks up the street. Some women have it, others pack it. Pound has it in the evocative power he has over words. What is it? Damned if I know. Even some little children have it, even infants when they are born. To me it is an immoral quality. I suppose Napoleon and Alexander had it to perfection. It makes a man think he is better than anyone else. But unless he uses it for others, to make himself a servant in some sense for humanity, to man, to those about him who need him—he turns out to be a selfish bastard like Pound, like Napoleon—like the Negro porter, like the infant as soon as he grows up.[7]

If Williams' reaction to Pound's sometimes tyrannical manner was judgmental, George Santayana, another correspondent, reacted with courteous incomprehension when Pound easily assumed that their philosophical and ideological positions were identical. John McCormick

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has described the almost total nonmeeting of minds displayed in their exchange of letters, and has attributed the misapprehension that Pound and Santayana were "political and intellectual bedfellows during the Fascist years,"[8] to Pound's "compulsive single-mindedness" (*SP,* p. 433), which led him to the inference that Santayana, since he did not vociferously demur, must agree with his (Pound's) ideas. Thus, Pound referred to Santayana four times in his infamous wartime broadcasts "as though they were intimates" (*SP,* p. 423). But on May 22, 1941, Santayana wrote to his confidant, Daniel Cory: "Ezra Pound was here yesterday, quite mad . . . I wonder if he is understood when he speaks through the radio. Why does he talk in that way? . . ." (*SP,* p. 422). McCormick concludes: "It is a measure of Pound's remoteness from certain human truths that he mistook Santayana's astonished politeness for cordiality and even for approval of his ideas . . ." (*SP,* p. 422).

One might have expected a similar incomprehension in the Moore-Pound correspondence where on the surface ideological differences seem much greater than between Pound and Santayana.[9] There is sometimes a feeling of a dialogue of the deaf, particularly on Moore's part. After an obstreperous assault by Pound on some friend or colleague, or some principle or belief, there is a resounding silence on her side. The work of feminist critics such as Susan Friedman or Alicia Ostriker provides one angle of explanation—for a woman opting out of battle is the best attack. Freudian criticism offers another: fear of one's own aggression can produce excessive passivity. Or there is Moore's own species of comment. In a letter to H. D. she says: "Well—I am an outlaw and rebuffer of the best. But I cannot understand how Ezra Pound should turn rude at times. . . . There is one answer—as I see you feel—silence when subjected to anomaly."[10]

The fact is, however, that for the most part Pound's self-confident insistence, his affectionate bullying, his adoption of the roles, first of literary lawgiver, then, of paternal or grandparental authority, fit well with Marianne Moore's astonishing sense of herself as unruly, lazy, and in need of admonishment, her frequent expression of the most abject humility. Male figures for Moore were preferred in sagely socialized roles, as ministers ("The Reverend Darr"), employers ("Mr. Thayer," "Dr. Watson"), or other women's husbands. (See her letters to William Carlos Williams, addressed to "William" and concluding inevitably with "love to Florence.") It is enlightening in this context to notice that she corresponded with Pound for sixteen years (1918–1934) before she changed from "Dear Mr. Pound" to "Dear E. P.," while as early as 1921 she had referred to him in letters to Bryher and H. D. as "Ezra."

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Fortunately, Marianne Moore's humility did not extend to her sense of what was genuine in the world of the imagination. While she was modest, ready to be corrected, even self-deprecatory, she always remained firm in her knowledge of her own perceptions and aims. She was not overwhelmed by others' ideas or standards. In the social world she might be self-effacing. In the world of intellect and imagination she stood equal in every sense, and was even feminist in her sensibilities.[11] This intellectual independence appealed to Pound, for when he sensed artistic excellence, he was strong in developing and advertising it. Nothing more appealed to him than helpless artistic excellence.

The Moore-Pound correspondence comprises more than 400 items (including letters to and from Dorothy Pound, who acted as amanuensis for Pound part of the time while he was in St. Elizabeth's); there are letters, postcards, and scribbled notes. The opening letter, from Pound to Marianne Moore, is dated December 16, 1918; the last two items are a letter from Moore to Pound on March 27, 1966, and a note from Pound to Moore, dated 31. 3. 67.[12] Marianne Moore died at the age of eighty-five on February 5, 1972, Pound at eighty-seven on November 1, 1972.

The correspondence falls naturally into four chronological divisions. The first period, from 1918–1923, consists of the introductory letters, in which Pound, soliciting Marianne Moore's work and support, conducts a rather combative investigation of her background and ideas. The second, 1925–1929, the period of Moore's editorship of the *Dial,* inverts the relationship somewhat, with Moore becoming the insistent solicitor, and Pound the reluctant contributor. After the demise of the *Dial* in 1929, the correspondence enters a new phase: Pound continually urges Moore to become a kind of cultural attaché for him in the United States, and simultaneously undertakes vigorous entrepreneurial activities on her behalf. During this period the correspondence gradually assumes a more personal aspect. There is a break from 1939 to 1946, during World War II. The exchange of letters begins again when, with Pound incarcerated in St. Elizabeth's, Moore gingerly and with enormous tact (not needed by the way, to go by Pound's response) resumes contact. This final phase, the longest of the four, continues through 1967, five years before both Pound and Marianne Moore died. Over these twenty years the letters are marked by increasing warmth and personal regard.

The letters written between 1918 and 1939 (excluding the *Dial* correspondence, which falls naturally into a separate category) have a certain cohesiveness, making it possible to deal with them as a distinctive

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unit. The material is of considerable historical and literary interest, dealing as it does with a crucial period in the articulation of modernist theory, and touching upon so many major and minor literary figures of the period. World War II acts as a natural cutting-off point for that phase of the correspondence because of the profound historical and sociological changes that came about in the English-speaking literary world after the war, as well as the radical shift in Pound's position after his arrest and incarceration. (To his credit, the change in the character of the correspondence is not nearly so great as one might have expected had he been a man with a less stubborn sense of mission and self-worth.)

The correspondence between 1918 and 1939 is dominated by Pound's preoccupation with the need for a journal that would provide an outlet for the literature he considered of value, and by his disdain for the dead bureaucracies of American government, business, and cultural institutions, which in his eyes were preventing support of deserving artists. A strange subtheme emerges in the letters of this period, a muted argument over Moore's adherence to the church, against the background of Pound's self-proclaimed war on monotheism. The correspondence would seem to reverse the accepted picture of the two: Pound, the pagan, becomes the missionary preacher; Moore, the moralist, gracefully adheres to the primary bidding of art.

In 1918, Marianne Moore was thirty-two years old, and had just moved to New York City when she received the first letter on record from Ezra Pound,[13] who had been following her work with approbation since 1915 when her poetry began to appear in the *Egoist*. His letter exhibited two very Poundian characteristics: he was ready to take over completely—to give advice, to correct her grammar and punctuation, to help her to get published; and he was already busy finding her literary ancestors outside the United States. Moore's reply was no less characteristic, being modest to the point of self-effacement: "My work jerks and rears and I cannot get up enthusiasm for embalming what I myself accept conditionally." But she knew who she was and where she came from:

> The resemblance of my progress to your beginnings is an accident so far as I can see. . . . I like to fight but I admit that I have at times objected to your promptness with the cudgels, I say this merely to be honest. I have no Greek, unless a love for it may be taken as knowledge of it and I have not read very voraciously in French; I do not know Ghil and La Forgue and know of no tangible French influence on my work. Gordon Craig, Henry

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> James, Blake, the minor prophets and Hardy are so far as I know the direct influences bearing on my work. . . . I like New York. . . .[14]

In reply to Pound's rather offhand request for personal information—"O what about your age. . . . And are you a jet black Ethiopian Othello-hued. . . ,"[15] Moore supplied an exact autobiographical summary, one which fueled a continuing "jokey" badgering on Pound's part, in the personal aspect of their correspondence, over the years. She acknowledged that she had been brought up in the home of her grandfather, "a clergyman of the Presbyterian Church," and that she and her mother had come to New York to be near her brother, "also a clergyman" and "since the war Chaplain of the battleship Rhode Island."[16]

Nothing could better illustrate the imbalance in psychological register between them than Pound's response to her very formal letter (signed "Sincerely yours"). Her one slightly critical remark about taking up the cudgels prompted an extended defense, based on some questionable gendered presumptions: "The female is a chaos, / the male / is a fixed point of stupidity, but only the female / can content itself with prolonged conversation / with but one sole other creature of its own sex. . . ."

In addition, he launched an extended attack on her Protestant affiliations (a significant part of which, for some reason, was eliminated in the version of the letter printed in his *Selected Letters*). The quotes that follow are from the original in the Rosenbach collection.

> Out of your Nathaniel Hawthorne frigidities can you—
> I think not—
> stand for my temple to Pallas Athene and for my cult of
> other ancient and less prohibited deities:
> for my preference of Omar to Melancthon;
> of Anacreon to John Calvin; . . .
>
> No. I had better leave you to Mr. Kreymborg and Bill Williams
> and leave off meddling in American matters
>
> But I am so "confounded polygamous":
> . . . behold me
> even upon the threshold of your Presbyterian stair-turn
> my lechery
> capable of all altitudes; . . .
>
> no reflection
> on the habits of your particular family
> but they are not alone in their clerical functions. I have seen

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Savanarola still swinging the crucifix,
down from Saló for the week-end of exhorting
the backsliders of Venice; and the Reverend Cavaliere Dottore
Alessandro
Robertson denouncing the Babylonian woman
and the Rrrroman releegion
with fervour::::O my Christ with fervour and sincerity . . .[17]

These causeries, which I have not quoted in full, evoked, so far as I have been able to discover, no direct response from Moore, until 1931, twelve years and many, many letters later, when, in a review of *A Draft of XXX Cantos,* she took them up in passing.

> . . . and apropos of "feminolatry," is not the view of woman expressed by the Cantos older-fashioned than that of Siam and Abyssinia? knowledge of the femaleness of *chaos,* of the *octopus,* of *Our mulberry leaf, woman* appertaining more to Turkey than to a Roger Ascham? . . .[18]
>
> And since the Cantos are scrupulous against half-truth and against *what had been thought for too long*—ought they not to suggest to those who have accepted Calvin by heresay—heresy—that one must make a distinction between Calvin the theologian and Calvin the man of letters? Or is Mr. Pound indifferent to wit from that quarter— . . .[19]

These two cryptic critical comments in an otherwise encomiastic review took up almost the whole of Pound's next letter. Moore's suggestion that his views on women (expressed in Canto XXIX) seemed more suited to the keeper of a harem than to those of an enlightened humanist was not quite comprehended (perhaps by 1931 he had forgotten that the discussion had been initiated in his 1919 letter). "The Grand Turk," he queried, "a series of individuals, or a figure of fun, it is a bit difficult to locate his old fashionedness." Her endorsement of Calvin, on the other hand, unleashed an avalanche:

> . . . It never occurred to me that Calvin cd. have the slightest importance, surely a minor variant of a known disease.
> . . . I don't think protestantism very important, it is
> a segment of Xtianity/ all of which has an historic position but . . . (and despite all the trappings, howdahs etc.) . . .
> I am
> concerned with the alive; HO BIOS
> Obviously the dust of Xtianity is one of the chief petty
> annoyances of mod. life. . . .
> In any case, my dear; you ought to
> write more; you ought (if you've
> got the shreds of a bloomin' N.E.

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via St. Louis) conscience, to be
engaged in clearing up some of the mess quarterly offered us in
Symposium Criterion H & H
etc. let alone horrible state of the crit/weaklies

compatriots seems to be incompatible
with the Unitarian
and Calvinical principles (or poss/ the unilaterals
left it out . . . shall I believe
that you're not a good Congregationalist?[20]

Moore's response to all this and much more was, to say the least, startling. On November 9, 1931, she wrote:

> . . . I agree with you that there are substitutes for Calvin but the commentaries on the minor prophets, the letters, trouble about translators, and so on, have life. . . . I saw recently that a man who had written in the front of one of Calvin's books, "This is not true," was complained of by Calvin and put to death, yet such things even if true have nothing to do with style.[21]

It took Pound an uncharacteristic three years to react to this statement. Meanwhile, the discussion of "church matters" (Moore's phrase) continued in jabs and asides throughout the Thirties. While acknowledging that Moore was an unlikely candidate for "the girl gunman holding up the N.Y. licherary iniquity,"[22] Pound returned again and again to his claim that as a person of conscience she should enlist in the good battle against the forces of darkness: "the Canbies and Dorens and Benéts,"[23] "the desolate waste barbarism of our unspeakable fatherland,"[24] "all the Phelpses, Babbits and all the 1920 to 1927 non-producers,"[25] "stinkenbaum or pettlebum,"[26] "that pore old idiot in Chi,"[27] "the authors too stupid to dissociate economic cause from INNER necessity,"[28] "Kirstink and Zabel" and "the foeter [sic] of the capitalist system [which] penetrates every cranny,"[29] etc.

Pound became increasingly frantic in his missionary zeal. In response to Moore's statement that she considered herself a Quaker,[30] he once again showed his paradoxical regard for the Protestant conscience he continually denounced.[31] Finally returning, in 1934, three years after the fact, to the stylistic defense of Calvin in her 1931 missive, he accused her of being an aesthete:

> FROM the mere whatnot and glass case of culture; you have got to wake up to ECON as factor/ in fact prob/ the MAIN factor in the filth, garbage abomination, Sat. eve post/ american maggerzeen filth pail wherin we grew up . . .
>
> Yr/ "soul" or whatever the quakers call it ought to be strong

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enough to STAND a bit MORE fiesta.
spiritual cowardice can take the form of austerity and asceticism.
But how the devil CAN you be part quaker and fall for Calvin. caught by "style" or wot.
aesthete to the last?[32]

Moore remained, for the most part, unruffled. A curious identification with his aggressiveness seems to have played a role in her acceptance of what would seem excess beyond the bounds of good taste even to one less punctilious than Marianne Moore. "My mother says that you and I are too much alike, except that you know a great deal more than I do—too bellicose—to be useful to the misguided."[33]

Her gratitude to Pound for his unceasing efforts on her behalf and on behalf of all his protegés, combined with her unstinting admiration for his actual achievements in the arts (his translations as well as *The Cantos*), moderated her carefully phrased distaste for his abusive attacks on the entire literary and political establishment, including some people whom she herself liked and admired. Pound's entrepreneurial efforts on behalf of American literature in the 1930s, considering his economic situation and considering the general economic situation, were truly prodigious. In 1931 he managed to arrange publication in Europe of *Profile,* an anthology that aspired to "define the epoch." He included five poems by Marianne Moore. (The only poet in the collection represented by more than five poems was Ezra Pound.) While more than grateful—"you are even over-magnanimous"—she was not overwhelmed. In her enthusiastic response she did find space to comment: "I don't quite understand your omitting Wallace Stevens," and to make some disparaging remarks about Ernest Hemingway.[34] In October 1933, Pound produced another collection, the *Active Anthology* (this time under the Faber imprint) again with generous space for Marianne Moore.

In between he was constantly trying to throw work her way. "Sam says he is bringing out another number of the New Review . . . I shd. like him to print your brief summary of the available intellectual and literary resources of the U.S. in 1931/32."[35] "Il Mare wants an article from you."[36] "For the enessimoth time, Do get off an article of some kind to the New English Weekly."[37] "Strikes me that IF you had the patience to tell the reader what Brooklyn is really like, you cd/ get the price of a winter overcoat out of GLOBE, 157 $\frac{1}{2}$ West Fifth St., St. Paul, Minn."[38]

As soon as the *Dial* folded he began to sound Moore out on her

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willingness to take over as editor of another literary journal, one for which he was obviously going to try to drum up money in Europe. This subject was a persistent theme of their letters during the 1930s. Pound was convinced that all the journals appearing were unreceptive to genuine talent (that is, Pound, Moore, WCW, Zukofsky, Eliot) and out of touch with economic reality. Time and again Moore refused to consider herself a candidate. She was too much taken up with her domestic duties: "When I see that my mother has more to attend to than is good for her I at once become involved. . . ."[39] She was too inattentive to the work of other writers: "The majority of our practitioners I do not know. I do not listen to every word that is said and do not like to take time to study what has escaped me."[40] She was too lazy and slow at doing her own work: "As for launching something, you force from me again the discreditable statement that I am glad of hospitality but will not work."[41]

As the decade progressed, and Pound's tone became increasingly obsessive, a subtle change took place in her replies. She argued that "one cannot clean the Augean stables from a distance," and became less concerned to defend her own iniquities, more preoccupied with cautioning him about his excesses:

> Mr. Burke is an expert, literarily, in several ways and has important essays in his book, Counter-Statement, and I bring down the knobbed club of a cannibal on anyone who says he isn't or hasn't. . . .[42]
>
> I think I asked you before, why lend conspicuousness to writers whom we regard as silly or corrupt? If we leave off work to exterminate what some call "their" work, might we not find ourselves in internal disagreement as to who are vermin?[43]
>
> Touching upon maledictions say anything you care to that the devil suggests, so long as you DONT include The Dial.[44]
>
> No magazine hires its contributors to make up issues, arrange for future material, or censor the work of fellow contributors.[45]
>
> Since my mother is getting well, I feel very affectionate and unliterary and this must be made allowance for—but I do not see anything the matter with Mr. Zabel nor Mr. Kirstein.[46]
>
> The top dog should take note of his position and not ridicule those below; and I will *not* have the struggling HOUND & HORN and tiny POETRY intimidated because of their unadvantageous position. . . .[47]
>
> Certainly in the matter of ready judgments on rich people, I am

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> as much against scattering mud on near objects as you once were yourself and I consider impersonal terms of abuse an affront to me.[48]

Nonetheless, she did not express direct disagreement with any of his political or economic ideas. She seemed to regard herself as lacking in adequate knowledge in these unfamiliar areas. Certainly, if we compare her letters with those of William Carlos Williams during the same period, we see the difference between bemused acquiescence, and an active, even aggressive, political counterattack. In 1936 she even told Pound: "I read your Jefferson and/or Mussolini, a page a day as a kind of 'daily light.' "[49]

Williams, too, responded positively at first to *Jefferson and/or Mussolini.* (See his letter to Pound, Sunday, Aug. 26? 1935, YCAL.) At the same time, however, he perceived the fundamental contradictions in Pound's position and argued with him vigorously. On March 25, 1935, for example, he wrote Pound:

> What in hell's all the fuss about? "To make the world better for the artist." And what in hell is the artist going to do with his world once it has been made better for him? He's going to shove it up his ass for all the good it is going to do him if he hasn't learned to live in it and report it in ANY age during which he happens to exist. Does it have to be specially prepared for him before he can use it? Is that, at the least to be his major function—to make the world better for himself as an artist?[50]

Marianne Moore's endorsement of *Jefferson and/or Mussolini* was not the only bizarre note sounded in the strange relationship unfolding itself against the background of that "low dishonest decade." A far more revealing contretemps involved Louis Zukofsky. Not only did Pound insist that Moore join in his attack on the deadwood of the literary establishment, and offer herself as possible editor for a journal that would express their (mostly his) ideas, he also expected her, in the name of cultural solidarity, to adopt his literary protegés, among them Zukofsky. Moore often cited her mother's and her own ill health as the reason why she did not encourage visitors. Her picture of her domestic situation is at one point worthy of a Marx Brothers movie:

> Conversation is a pleasure and I see no harm in it. On the other hand, I am conscious of the value of others' time and health, and am growing hard toward callers of the kind that ask you as you are being carried on a stretcher from your house to an ambulance, which you think is greatest—William Faulkner, Robinson Jeffers, or Josephine Baker. I am cautious, that is to say, about encouraging visitors who might stay too long or might

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> bore my mother. She is over the heads of most of them, although at pains to conceal the fact and is over-solicitous about them as animals—their needs and feelings. I said recently, "The visitor couldn't have felt hurt for you delayed him after he had said he must go." "Yes, but he knew that I delayed him out of contrition for not wanting him!"

She concludes this vignette with the remark: "I see no reason why I should see Louis Zukofsky, but then there is no reason why I should not."[51] Zukofsky had become a bone of contention between them. Moore kept explaining that she had nothing against the man, but that she did not think much of his work. She had already refused his essay on Henry Adams (recommended by Pound) while she was editor of the *Dial*. In 1933 she remarked: "My attitude toward Louis Zukofsky is one of polite attention: I think he has talent, but he has been forcing production and is unreduced and inexact. One avoids saying so lest the man's feelings be hurt and he mistake critical disapproval for dislike. . . ."[52] Pound, of course, could not believe that she could have any objective reason for rejecting work that he considered of value, and so by late 1934 had this to say:

> . . . I still think you ought to get over yr / snobbism re / Zukofsky / it can't be mere anti/semitism as you tolerate that really poisonous brit/yit . . . whose only excuse is that she probably is so near the border of insanity as not to be responsible.
>
> The absolute and utter filth of a wumman who can inherit a hundred million and WRITE that she can't afford 10 dollars a month for Carnevali's upkeep,
>
> is below any dung and
>
> offal that my vocabulary reaches.
>
> It is the obscenity of the mad horse.
>
> H/D is I take it
>
> too enfeebled by long toleration to do
>
> anything about it.
>
> Semite/sadism/ hatred of light.[53]

He was referring to Bryher, born Winifred Ellerman, daughter of a Scottish shipping magnate, Sir John Reeves Ellerman. That same year Pound had asked Bryher to contribute to the upkeep of a poet, E. Carnevali, who was indigent and mortally ill; she had refused, stating that she had never met nor corresponded with Carnevali, and that she had extensive obligations to many people whom she knew personally.

Pound, in the frenzy of his puritanical self-righteousness, could not have been aware of the many levels of injustice he was committing in his anti-Semitic attack on Marianne Moore's presumed anti-Semitism.

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Bryher was not Jewish, except possibly in some racist sense. Her father, Sir John Ellerman, was the son of an early nineteenth-century German immigrant to England, Johan Herman Ellerman. There is no clear indication whether or not Johan Ellerman was Jewish. He married a woman named Ann Reeves in Hull. It would seem that she was not Jewish, nor was Bryher's mother, Hannah Glover. According to orthodox Jewish tradition one's religion is determined by one's mother's religion, not that of one's father. On the other hand, everyone in H. D.'s circle, including H. D., seemed to assume that Bryher was Jewish, even though her father said he was not, and did not in any way practice the religion. Robert McAlmon, in an unpublished novel, clearly based on his relationship with H. D. and Bryher, has the Bryher-figure say that she is sure that she is Jewish, although her father says he is not, because she feels an identity with the East. The manuscript has a number of crude anti-Semitic references to Bryher.

Bryher was also a model of philanthropy. From the early 1930s she started helping Jewish friends, including associates of Freud, to escape from Germany and Austria to England and the United States. The greatest irony, however, is that Marianne Moore herself had for many years been the object of Bryher's philanthropic efforts. In 1922, Bryher had sent her a check for $300, as "a guarantee of leisure for writing."[54] Moore at that time refused the money on the grounds that she was not worthy of the investment, her work habits being so undisciplined. She also refused an offer to take her on as a secretary or traveling companion for a trip which Bryher and H. D. were contemplating to the Middle East—a patent ruse to save her from what they saw as an intolerably confined life in New York City. (The offer even included a trip for Mrs. Moore; apparently she was to wait in Florence while the others were touring the Mediterranean.) This information emerges in a warm and friendly letter written by Mrs. Moore to Bryher in which she states that Marianne is incapable of fulfilling any of the tasks that might justify her accepting support from Bryher, and what is more, that she is too fragile and sensitive to leave her home. Using the biblical analogy of the eagle who stirs up her nest to drive the eaglets out so that they will learn to fly, and then, when they feel they are dropping to destruction, spreads her wings under them and restores them to their nest (Deut., 32:11), she looks back at Marianne Moore's experience at the Indian School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, as a near disaster, and concludes: "But in ways less stern, it is good for young birds to flutter their wings, and I wish never to be a weight around her tiny claws. However, I am not the

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good eagle—and don't know how to push her off the ledge. *She* won't go, and I am more the pigeon than the eagle."[55]

In addition to this early attempt at benevolence on Bryher's part, after Sir John Ellerman's death on July 16, 1933 (the newspaper obituary called him "the richest man in England"), she set up a trust fund to pay an annuity to Marianne Moore and a number of other people in Britain and the United States. Knowing Moore's almost obsessive reluctance to accept any kind of support, despite the fact that she and her mother were very hard-pressed for money after the collapse of the stock market in 1929, and the demise of the *Dial* in the same year, Bryher went to great lengths to explain to Moore that the whole thing was a device to help her to evade some of the heavy British estate taxes (which according to newspaper reports at the time did actually eat up about fifty percent of the inheritance). The proof, if any were needed, that this was only a tactful means of persuading Moore to accept the arrangement, is the fact that from the end of World War II, Bryher gave up the cover story and began sending Marianne Moore large sums of money directly through the office of her New York lawyers. In addition, she unfailingly gave her substantial checks both on her birthday in November, and for Christmas. It is clear from Moore's reactions that while she found the position of dependence extremely embarrassing, she began to accept the money because she felt that she needed it to make her mother more comfortable as Mrs. Moore's health became increasingly uncertain from the middle of the 1930s until her death on July 9, 1947.

In the light of Moore's long-standing friendship with Bryher (she started exchanging letters with her in 1920 and, a sure sign of intimacy and affection, signed her letters with a pet nickname, "dactyl," short for pterodactyl), it is a matter of interest to record that she did not immediately react to Pound's assault on her friend, but for once rose hotly to her own defense. She took the unprecedented step, for her, of claiming credit for her own undiscriminating support of artists of whatever persuasion: "As for snobbery about anybody, Jew or Gentile, I have exerted myself for too large a number of the indiscriminately mixed two you would say. . . ."[56]

This terse rejoinder, as so often with her reactions to Pound, covered a large area of unexpressed difference of opinion, which she rarely brought directly to the surface. In 1921 she had shown no reluctance in taking Robert McAlmon to task openly for his anti-Semitism. "Can't you belabor the Parisiens without including the Jews?" she had commented. "I think the getting spirit of the Jew is the

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same as ours but they are a little more successful than we are. I have had to do with the very highest type of Jew and I suppose for that reason, I don't feel the force of the general antipathy."[57] But then, she was unusually open in her opinions in all her letters to McAlmon, motivated initially by her extreme disapproval of both the inner and the outer aspects of his marriage to Bryher.

In 1921, when H. D. and Bryher were on a trip to the United States from England, Bryher met McAlmon and they were married within a short period after their first encounter. The marriage was an international scandal; the newspapers played on the piquant angle—the daughter of one of the richest men in England marries a poor bohemian. It is clear that it was a *mariage de convenance* for both parties; Bryher gained freedom from the overly protective atmosphere of her home by achieving the status of a married woman; McAlmon was handsomely rewarded financially, and could fulfill the then American dream—getting to Europe. William Carlos Williams registered one version of the marriage in his *Autobiography,* a version heavily influenced by McAlmon's point of view. Williams saw McAlmon as the innocent party carried off by the scheming lesbian Bryher. (Incidentally, neither H. D. nor Bryher ever forgave Williams for this account.) Marianne Moore adopted a view of the marriage which was the exact antithesis of that of Williams. She saw McAlmon as the exploiter and Bryher as the victim. (Her view of marriage, despite all the ironic obliquities of "Marriage," clearly did not encompass a *mariage de convenance.*)

One's impression is that her directness with McAlmon was also in part a result of her sense of his limitations as a writer, her circumspection with Pound an outcome of her enormous respect for his disciplined creative abilities. Her letters to both Bryher and McAlmon during the period after their marriage record her many reservations about McAlmon's work.

Another ironic footnote to Moore's silent disagreement with Pound over his attitudes toward the Jews: on August 25, 1933, Moore had sent on to the *New York Times* an extensive deposition from a Jew in Germany who had been horribly manhandled and tortured by storm troops in Berlin and forced, by threats to himself and his family, to turn over his business and apartment to the SA. The man also described how he had seen German communists and Jewish intellectuals brutally tortured to death in front of his eyes. The deposition had been written in German and translated by Bryher, who sent it to Moore from London. None of this finds echo in her correspondence with Pound.[58]

It was not until December 1939, five years later, and three months

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after the outbreak of World War II, that Moore finally referred openly to Pound's scurrilous attack on Bryher. In the autumn of 1939, a year and a half after the Anschluss, a year after Kristallnacht and the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, after the invasion of Poland, Pound was still chewing over the possibilities of launching a new literary journal and, apparently, was not above tapping Bryher, the "semite-sadist," for funds. Moore was, as always when it came to discussing work, to the point:

> Indispensable requisites for an editor, it seems to me, are that he know good from bad, and that he be fond of toil, that he should not be doing the work for the sake of salary . . .
>
> You are the one to edit the magazine; but I don't see how you could do it without being here at least half the year. . . .
>
> I have a standard list of favorite practitioners which coincides with yours, we have here now, W. H. Auden and William Empson (?) and Mr. F. V. Morley. If you were to arrive home with Wyndham Lewis and T. S. Eliot it would be a help. . . .

And she concludes:

> Winifred Ellerman is one of the least ungenerous or intolerant persons I have ever known. It is many years since she has said anything to me of you. Her comments were unequivocally friendly; but I have not mentioned you to her, knowing your destructive attitude.[59]

That was to be the last word for seven years. Looking back at this twenty years of correspondence from a distance, some confusing aspects of Marianne Moore's personality stand out. One is impressed by the unfailing tact and sensitivity with which she handled the anomalies of Pound's verbal behavior. On the other hand, there is a distinct impression, at least part of the time, that what attracted her to Pound were some of the very qualities she most decried in others—his lack of limits, his unabashed verbal aggressiveness, his outlaw stance. Certainly, the repressed violence, the terror, which are at the center of some of her finest poems, might indicate such an explanation. Attention has been called to the many poems that dwell upon the varied defensive postures of an array of surrogate animals; the need for camouflage or shield of course postulates a prior threat. I am thinking here, however, of those poems that acknowledge complicity in violence, such as "Silence," "A Grave," "Marriage," "Peter," "An Octopus," "Bird-Witted," "The Steeple-Jack," and "In Distrust of Merits."

And then we come to the question that Pound himself raised: who was the aesthete? who the puritan? One can reasonably ask if Pound by

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the end of the 1930s, with his messianic convictions, was not more like the puritanical preacher (the "Reverend Cavaliere Dottore Alessandro Robertson" he had parodied so deliciously in his 1919 letter to Moore) than a devotee of "the ancient and less prohibited deities." Eliot Weinberger puts the problem succinctly:

> As Mircea Eliade has remarked, the behavior of Yahweh was to become the "model and justification" for "the intolerance and fanaticism that are characteristic of the prophets and missionaries of (all) three monotheisms."
>
> Pound's modernism, pantheism, and Hellenism are contrary to Judaeo-Christian-Islamic tradition. Yet, as a product of the monotheisms, he asserts his contempt in their very terms. Both Pound and his tradition are xenophobic; both believe in an enlightened elite. And, like the Christians and Muslims (if not the Jews), Pound believed that the others, no matter how damned, were capable of conversion. Whatever we think of the cause, he spent his life trying to persuade the world onto the True Path.[60]

Was Marianne Moore, as Pound claimed, "an aesthete"? Whatever her views on Calvin and style, however carefully she avoided being drawn into direct political commitment, from the "whatnot and glass case" of her Brooklyn apartment she had produced, by the end of the 1930s, some of the most powerful moral poetry of the twentieth century, stylized aesthetic meditations with metaphysical reverberations: "To explain grace requires / a curious hand."

Pound, through all his mad and tragic obsessiveness, understood that "curious hand" better than many. When it came to whatever is "there," the "genuine, in the elusive art of words," they both saw it in one another's work. In response to a request from Pound,[61] in one of the early communications from St. Elizabeth's, we find Moore supplying a quote from "In Distrust of Merits":

> Hate-hardened heart, O heart of iron,
> iron is iron till it is rust.
> There never was a war that was not inward; I must
> fight till I have conquered in myself what
> causes war

This anguished Christian cry of guilt, the anathema of modernist critics, is the poem that Pound would have preferred to represent Moore's work in his final anthology, which he published with Marcella Spahn. The poem included in *Confucius to Cummings* is "O To Be a Dragon." It is followed by a note, signed M. S., but clearly bearing the mark of Pound's dictation: "Selection by Marianne Moore follows a suggestion

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from her; we had intended using the poem which contains the reference to causes of war in oneself."[62]

When asked for a contribution to a volume of homage to Pound after the war, Marianne Moore quoted his own words from *The Spirit of Romance* in his defense:

> Some mystic or another speaks of the intellect standing in the same relation to the soul as do the senses to the mind; and beyond certain border, surely we come to this place where the ecstasy is not a whirl or madness of the senses but a glow arising from the exact nature of the perception. We find a similar thought in Spinoza where he says that "the intellectual love of a thing consists in the understanding of its perfections."

And she adds: "We have no more impassioned precisionist, it seems to me, than Ezra Pound. . . . Regarding fascism, apparently alien peoples, and penitential devoutness, my feeling is the diametrical opposite of what Ezra Pound would have us think his feeling is."[63]

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[1] Marianne Moore, "Humility, Concentration and Gusto," *Predilections* (New York: Viking, 1955), p. 9.

[2] Marianne Moore, Review of *A Draft of XXX Cantos, Predilections*, p. 69.

[3] EP to MM, 14 Feb. XI, 1933, YCAL.

[4] Moore, "Humility, Concentration and Gusto," p. 18.

[5] Moore, "Feeling and Precision." *Predilections*, p. 4.

[6] Timothy Materer, "Doppelgänger: Ezra Pound in His Letters," *Paideuma*, 11, No. 2 (Fall 1982), 241–56.

[7] John Thirlwall, ed., *The Selected Letters of William Carlos Williams* (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1957), p. 223.

[8] John McCormick, "George Santayana and Ezra Pound," *American*

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Literature, 54, No. 3 (Oct. 1982), 423. Subsequent references are cited parenthetically in the text as *SP*.

[9] Santayana, while fundamentally nonpolitical, sympathized with the domestic policies of Mussolini's regime, and shared the general genteel American anti-Semitism of the early twentieth century.

[10] MM to H. D., June 27, 1954, YCAL.

[11] Elizabeth Bishop in "Efforts of Affection: A Memoir of Marianne Moore," tells us that Moore had been an active feminist and paraded with the suffragettes demonstrating on behalf of the vote for women, and even "climbed a lamppost." *The Collected Prose* (New York: Farrar, 1984), p. 144

[12] I tend to believe that the letters I have seen, in the collections at the Rosenbach, the Beinecke, and the Lilly Library at Indiana University, do not comprise the whole of the Moore-Pound correspondence. At several places there are inexplicable gaps, especially in the introductory phase. Why, for example, does the correspondence, after the first flurry of letters, break off so abruptly in June 1919? Why are there no letters between May 1921 and April 1923? And none again until the *Dial* correspondence in 1925? No letters at all in 1938?

[13] EP to MM, Dec. 16, 1918, Rosenbach. In the Rosenbach collection there is an envelope of a letter from Pound to Moore dated 8 May 1918, but no letter.

[14] *Marianne Moore: A Collection of Critical Essays,* ed. Charles Tomlinson, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p. 17.

[15] *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound,* ed. D. D. Paige (London: Faber, 1950), p. 142.

[16] Tomlinson, *Marianne Moore*, p. 17.

[17] EP to MM, 1 Feb. 1919, Rosenbach.

[18] Moore, *Predilections,* p. 69.

[19] *Ibid.,* p. 70.

[20] EP to MM, 6 Oct. 1931, Rosenbach.

[21] MM to EP, Nov. 9, 1931, YCAL.

[22] EP to MM, Nov. 26, 1931, Rosenbach.

[23] EP to MM, Nov. 26, 1931, Rosenbach. Henry Seidel Canby (1878–1961); Carl Van Doren (1885–1950); Mark Van Doren (1894–1973); Stephen Vincent Benét (1898–1943); William Rose Benét (1886–1950); Laura Benét, the sister of Stephen and William, was a close friend of Marianne Moore.

[24] EP to MM, 14 Feb. XI, 1933, YCAL.

[25] EP to MM, 26 or 27 anno XI, '33, Rosenbach. William Lyon Phelps (1865–1943); Irving Babbitt (1865–1933).

[26] EP to MM, 1933/34?, YCAL.

[27] EP to MM, 1933/34?, YCAL. Harriet Monroe (1860–1936).

[28] EP to MM, Feb. 27, 1934, Rosenbach.

[29] EP to MM, 18 May, 1934, YCAL. Lincoln Kirstein (1907–); Morton Dauwen Zabel (1901–1964).

[30] MM to EP, June 25, 1934, YCAL.

[31] Marianne Moore herself provides an excellent Freudian explanation for Pound's behavior; in a letter to Bryher in 1921, she makes the perspicacious remark: "Ezra has written me and speaks most disrespectfully of America. Defiance being a form of dependence, according to Freud, we perhaps should be honored." May 9, 1921, YCAL.

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[32] EP to MM, July 11, 1934, Rosenbach.
[33] MM to EP, Jan. 5, 1934, YCAL.
[34] MM to EP, July 29, 1932, YCAL.
[35] EP to MM, Nov. 26, 1931, YCAL.
[36] EP to MM, Dec. '32, Rosenbach.
[37] EP to MM, July 26, 1935, Rosenbach.
[38] EP to MM, 24. 7. 37, Rosenbach.
[39] MM to EP, Dec. 12, 1931, Rosenbach.
[40] MM to EP, July 24, 1932, YCAL.
[41] MM to EP, Jan. 18, 1933, YCAL.
[42] MM to EP, Jan. 18, 1933, YCAL. Some of Pound's comments on Burke: EP to MM, 14 Feb. XI (1933?), YCAL: "Kirstein a mere pimp and Burke one of the vast turba of obscurantists who try to distract readers from work of first intensity and focus attention on flaccis [sic] essays." EP to MM, June 4, 1933, Rosenbach: "I daresay Burke is better than the rest / but surely all he has ever written is merely ersatz// offering the polite mediatation [sic] in place of the object / in place of the WORK."
[43] MM to EP, March 2, 1933, YCAL.
[44] MM to EP, July 21, 1933, YCAL. One of Pound's frequent attacks on the *Dial:* "The Dial at record outlay and expense did less work in ten years than the Little Review in two//" Feb. XI (1933?), YCAL.
[45] MM to EP, Jan. 5, 1934, YCAL.
[46] MM to EP, May 5, 1934, YCAL.
[47] MM to EP, May 5, 1934, YCAL.
[48] MM to EP, March 4, 1935, Rosenbach. I have not been able to trace the Pound comments which occasioned this remark.
[49] MM to EP, Nov. 24, 1936, YCAL.
[50] William Carlos Williams to EP, March 25, 1935, YCAL.
[51] MM to EP, July 24, 1932, YCAL. Marianne Moore's reclusiveness and reluctance to permit visitors to trouble her mother are legend. But surely the prime example concerns Pound himself. In 1939, when she heard, through Lester Littlefield, that Pound was planning to come to the United States, she assumed that he meant to return permanently. In a letter enthusiastically welcoming his return, she gave him detailed instructions on how to reach her place by subway ("by taking the 'A' Express on the 8th Avenue Independent Subway and getting out at the Lafayette Station") and then added (after having corresponded with the man for twenty years without meeting him once) "We are at present not seeing friends and not using the telephone but trust that you will . . . come to see us eventually." April 21, 1939, YCAL.
[52] MM to EP, March 28, 1935, YCAL.
[53] EP to MM, Dec.? '34, YCAL.
[54] MM to Bryher, June 26, 1922, YCAL.
[55] Mrs. Moore to Bryher, July 24, 1922, YCAL.
[56] MM to EP, Jan. 5. 1934, YCAL.
[57] MM to Robert McAlmon, July 8, 1921, Rosenbach.
[58] In their correspondence with Bryher during the 1930s both Marianne Moore and her mother frequently expressed pity and horror over the persecution of the Jews. At one point even, Mrs. Moore warns that the fate of every nation that has persecuted the Jews has been destruction.

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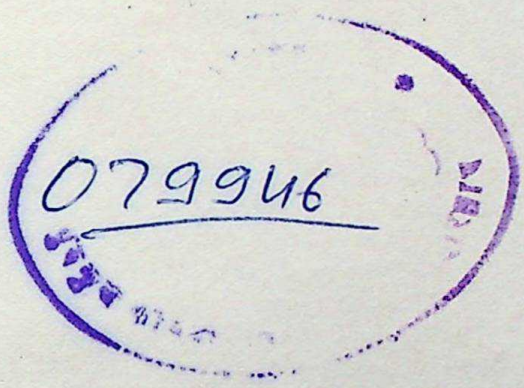
[59] MM to EP, Dec. 10, 1939, YCAL.

[60] Eliot Weinberger, "The Modernists in the Basement and the Stars Above," *Works on Paper, 1980–1986* (New Directions, 1986), p. 171.

[61] The letter is addressed to Dorothy Pound, who was acting as Pound's amanuensis at the time. May 18, 1948, YCAL.

[62] Ezra Pound and Marcella Spahn, *From Confucius to Cummings* (New York: New Directions, 1969), p. 312.

[63] For Ben Porter, June 25, 1946, Rosenbach.



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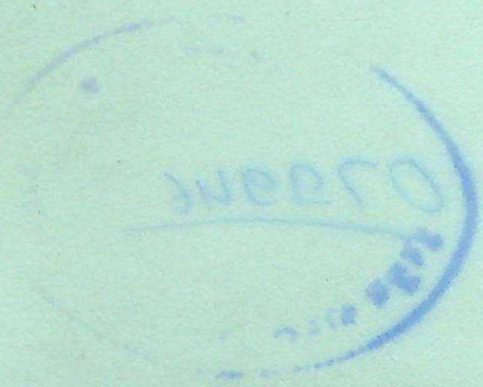

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